

GOSPEL TREASURE

Volume 2

Compiled and Edited
by
J.C. CHOATE

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INTRODUCTION

It is my pleasure to present to you Volume 2 of Gospel Treasure. As with the first volume, this material represents a number of Christian tracts. They are written by different brethren on subjects that have to do with the salvation of our souls.

The gospel of Christ, the truths of God, are more precious than silver and gold. As you read and study these lessons, you will discover that this is true. Thus the title, Gospel Treasure.

Within these pages are many great and fundamental teachings from God's word. It will be my prayer that you will carefully consider what is said, along with your Bible, and that this may be the means of leading you to obey God. In so doing, you can be saved and the Lord will add you to his church. This is something you will never regret. It will not only mean that your soul is saved, which itself is more valuable than all the world, but it will open untold treasure to you in the sense of all the blessings that God has in store for all of those that are his.

I would also ask that as you receive the truth, share this treasure with others. There are numerous rewards in obeying God and in taking his gospel to those who know it not. That's why I am so blessed to be able to present this volume to you at this time.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
Box 3815
New Delhi 110049
March 1, 1980

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WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE

Paul Southern

“Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” (II Tim. 3:16,17.)

“For no prophecy ever came by the will of men: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.” (II Pet. 1:21.)

“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.” (Heb. 1:1,2.)

The Bible is pre-eminently the Book of Books. When Sir Walter Scott lay dying, he asked his son-in-law to read to him out of the Book. Mr. Lockhart asked, “What book?” Scott’s reply was: “There is only one book, the Bible.”

Truly, the Bible is the most remarkable book of earth’s volumes. Carlyle called it “one of the grandest things ever written with pen. It is the beau ideal of all subjects that ever engaged the powers of burning eloquence or inspired poetic fire.” It is no wonder that the Psalmist exclaimed to God: “Thy testimonies are wonderful. ... The opening of thy words giveth light.” (Ps. 119:129, 130.)

The Bible is wonderful because it contains the infinite mind of God. Within this sacred volume is a divinity which makes it a diamond among the rocks, a light in the darkness, and a present help in every time of need.

ITS RATIONAL DOCTRINE

There are many reasons why we believe the Bible is a special revelation from God. Its profound and rational doctrine concerning God's man, and redemption distinguishes it from the books of men. The Bible presents an exalted conception of God not found elsewhere. Man has created many gods through the centuries. When Paul came to Athens, he found innumerable altars. "For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, "To An Unknown God." (Acts 17:23.) At Lystra the apostle found the heathens worshipping Mercury, Jupiter, and other heavenly bodies. (Acts 14.)

Heathen peoples have invented many mysterious creatures that imposed heavy burdens, grievous and austere. These god's were often angry, jealous, and hard task-masters.

The Bible pictures for us only one God, and forbids the worship of any other. (Ex. 20:1-4; Matt. 4:10.) He is presented as the great eternal Father of all, a perfect embodiment of divine holiness and always mindful of His children. The God of the Bible is infinite in power, knowledge, and holiness (Ps. 139:1-16), and present everywhere with loving compassion and tender mercy. (II Pet. 3:9.) Yet, He demands strict obedience and always puni-

shes the wicked. (Heb. 2:1-4.)

The Bible doctrine of man is consistent throughout. It never strikes a false note concerning man, nor contradicts a former conception of him. He is presented as a free moral agent, created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26; Josh. 24:14, 15.) Man is a triune being consisting of "spirit and soul and body" (I Thess. 5:23), with both inward and outward characteristics (II Cor. 4:16.)

The scheme of redemption set forth in the Bible culminates in a salvation by divine sacrifice. Man alienates himself from God by rebellion against divine authority. (Isa. 59:1, 2.) Since man is unable to save himself, God always supplies the Saviour. (Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5.) But salvation is everywhere conditional. God invites; man chooses. (Matt. 11:28-30; II Cor. 5:11.) Salvation demands a new birth. (John 3:5.) The saved person must demonstrate his transformation by inner purity, not mere external form. (Matt. 15:7-9; Rom. 12:1, 2.)

ITS MORALITY

The moral tone of the Bible is the highest and most sublime. Some critics reject it on the grounds that it records some of the vilest deeds of immorality. They forget that the Bible merely records these defections as historical, but never approves them. The fact that it brings every "skeleton out of the closet" of its greatest heroes is one of the best proofs of its inspiration.

When men write books they seek to enshrine their heroes as inerrant demigods of perfection and goodness.

The risqué episodes are edited out of their memoirs. Only the good traits and successful exploits are held up for observation.

But with God it is different. When He writes a book, he publicizes the darkest deeds of His greatest character. David was a man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14), but his sin of adultery with Bath-sheba goes down on the inspired record (II Sam. 11). And unlike human historians, God does not try to patch up the incident with gratuitous assumptions that David meant to do better. With a critical word of denunciation Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man." (II Sam. 12:7.) Truly, the word of God is living and active, and "all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:12, 13.)

When the Bible was being revealed to man, the moral trend was decidedly downward. Men's thoughts were gross, and national concepts looked toward corruption. Yet the Bible holds up a system of morality which is beyond reproach. The spiritual theme-song of the entire volume is: "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy." (Lev. 19:2.)

ITS UNITY

The unity of purpose within the Bible is another proof of its inspiration. For one man to write a book or a series of books with one central theme would not be so remarkable. But suppose that a number of men, separated by distance and many years, some without access to what had gone before, should undertake to write a book

with one theme. The production would be a failure.

The Bible was written by some thirty-five or forty persons over a period of about 1500 years. The authors came from various walks of life, and had very little or no access to former writings. Yet the unity is perfect, the one purpose throughout being the glory of God and the salvation of man through Jesus Christ the Lord. (Gen. 3:15; Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:10, 11; Rom. 6:23.)

The divine oratorio plays for fifteen hundred years in one grand symphony, yet the key is never lost and never changes. The music increases in volume and beauty until at last the redeemed chorus sings: "All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall, Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all."

ITS LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS

The literary characteristics of the Bible also show the touch of the divine hand. It contains the choicest gems of thought, combining a variety and richness of expression not found in any other book. Here we find the grandest literature of the world, with an appeal to every faculty of man—intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual.

The Bible is the source-book of all literature, for all good books are only the Bible in dilution. Destroy this grand old volume and you destroy the largest and most valuable portion of the world's writings. There is matchless beauty in its words and the most sublime philosophy in its teachings. William Lyon Phelps calls the King James Version of the Bible the "best edition of the best book ever written." Indeed, the sun never sets on its

gleaming page, for it is woven into the literature of the scholar as well as the talk of the street.

ITS SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY

Although the Bible is not necessarily a book on science, it does contain sufficient scientific wealth to prove its accuracy. It abounds in scientific allusions, and we marvel at the accuracy with which these subjects are treated. Science was a long time discovering that the present order of things had a beginning. The Bible asserts this fact in the opening verse, for "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1.) Science tells us that the creation of matter preceded the orderly arrangement of it. At the very outset the Bible says: "The earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." (Gen. 1:2.)

Science was a long time discovering that light existed before the sun was made. Moses revealed this fact when he penned the first page of Genesis. God said: "Let there be light: and there was light." (Gen. 1:4.) But it was on the fourth day of creation that "God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." (Gen. 1:14-19.)

Scientists tell us that the strata of the earth were formed by the action of water. Long before this discovery was made the Bible recorded, "The waters stood above the mountains." (Ps. 104:1-10.) For hundreds of years man believed the earth was flat, whereas the Bible was saying all the time: "It is he that sitteth above the circle of the earth." (Isa. 40:22.)

How was it possible for the writers of the scriptures to describe physical phenomena with such scientific accuracy? There is but one answer: the book of Nature and the book of Revelation teach but one set of truths. The same Creator that made this vast universe also inspired the Holy Scriptures.

ITS HISTORICAL ACCURACY

The historical accuracy of the Bible also sustains its divine authorship. Many facts recorded in secular history are paralleled minutely by the scriptures. The minor errors to which critics point have been inserted by copyists, and only serve to prove its credibility. No other book of antiquity will stand the test to which the Bible has been exposed.

Every discovery of the archaeologist in Bible lands confirms the genuineness of the sacred narrative. Secular historians contemporary with New Testament writers corroborate divine revelation. The inspired scriptures touch the lands and peoples on every side. In some supernatural way God has hung the pages of inspiration on hill and vale, which stand as silent sentinels of His eternal presence.

ITS UNCORRUPTED PRESERVATION

I believe the Bible is inspired because of its uncorrupted preservation. It is the only book that has successfully withstood continual attacks by critics and neglect by friends. Fire and sword have been its aggressors. Kings

and crusades have tried to destroy it.

At the outset of the fourth century, Diocletian instigated a most vehement attack upon the Bible. Almost every copy of the scriptures was destroyed, thousands of Christians perished, and a column of triumph with this inscription was erected over an exterminated Bible: "The name of the Christian has been extinguished." Within twenty years the Bible had come forth again to rekindle the earth and to be endorsed by Constantine in 325 A.D. as the infallible judge of truth.

Voltaire declared that one hundred years after his day there would be no Bible. But the Bible is still here, more potent than ever before, and the best seller of all books. Kingdoms rise and fall; pomp and pride vanish away, but "the word of our God shall stand forever." (Isa. 40:8.) Christ assures us that "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35.)

ITS INSISTENT CLAIMS

We believe the Bible because of its insistent claims for itself. It claims to be the living word of the living God, and no man has successfully denied it. The hammers of critics break and crumble away, but the anvil of God's Word remains.

More than four thousand times in the Old Testament alone we find the statement, "Thus saith the Lord," or its equivalent. Upon no rational basis could we affirm this to be the declaration of man. If good men had written the Bible, they would not have lied about the authorship. It could not have been written by evil men,

for they would not have written a book which upholds all virtue and condemns all evil. The conclusion is irrefutable: God inspired the Scriptures.

ITS FULFILLED PROPHECIES

Fulfilled prophecies likewise prove that the Bible is of supernatural origin. Man cannot know the future; only God can foretell it. The Bible foretold the future; therefore, the Bible is the Word of God. The history of Israel, written to cover fifteen hundred years in the future, was minutely fulfilled. (Deut. 28.) The Jews today are a living monument to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. (Cf. Jer. 5:18; 19:10, 11; 30:11; Amos 9:8.)

The Old Testament was completed several hundred years before Christ was born. Yet it points so perfectly to Him that in all points He fulfills its predictions. From the first promise of the Messiah (Gen. 3:15) to the final triumph and glorification of the Lord (Acts 2:22-36) every prophecy concerning Christ was fulfilled in minute detail.

ITS INFLUENCE

Furthermore, I believe the Bible because it is incomparable as a book of ethics. It shows man's obligations to himself, to his fellowman, and to his God. God's Word demands the denial of every vice, and the practice of every virtue. "Keep thyself pure" (I Tim. 5:22), "love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 19:19), and "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with

all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37), are Biblical excerpts that cover all ethical relationships.

The influence of the Bible is also irresistible. No person can study it prayerfully without becoming better. The only way to escape its influence is to quench the Spirit and close the heart against its teaching. (Matt. 13:14-16.) Its influence upon civilization cannot be denied, for it is the most purifying and uplifting power the world has ever known.

IT NEVER GETS OLD

The fact that the Bible cannot be mastered is another proof of its inspiration. I can learn the multiplication tables thoroughly at one sitting, so that further thought concerning the processes involved is no longer needed. I can master propositions in geometry, Greek tenses, Latin periphrastics, and the philosophies of Greece and Rome, but the Bible cannot be mastered. Study it for fifty years, and it still presents a challenge to the most masterful mind. Finite man is incapable of grasping the full significance of all that is involved in the scheme of redemption.

It is likewise significant that the Bible never gets old. Memorize it word for word, but the next time you look upon its pregnant pages it becomes sweeter and fresher. Its contents are like crystal waters that flow from a mountain spring. In the language of the Master, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." (Jno. 6:63.)

ITS PLAN OF SALVATION

Heaven's volume is the only sourcebook of God's plan of human redemption. Sin and guilt are recognized as universal. (Rom. 5:12.) The Bible presents the only way of escape, the only antidote for sin, the only hope of the world. (Jno. 3:16.) God sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins, "and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (I Jno. 2:2.) A knowledge of the Son is necessary to eternal life. (Jno. 17:3.) "And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." (I Jno. 2:3.) The Master said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mk. 16:16.)

The Bible is the "living word of the living God; supernatural in origin; eternal in duration; inexpressible in value; infinite in scope; divine in authorship; human in penmanship; regenerative in power; infallible in authority; universal in interest, and personal in application."

We are convinced that the Word of God has nothing to be afraid of. Let it speak clearly, distinctly, and above its breath, always and in any society.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Roy Deaver

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTORY:

1. Noah was obligated to build according to the pattern.
2. Moses was obligated to build according to the pattern.
3. We are obligated to build according to the pattern.
4. The present task.

DISCUSSION:

The New Testament Church:

- I. Is a divine institution.
- II. Was purposed, planned, and promised by God.
- III. Was prepared for in Old Testament history.
- IV. Was foretold by the prophets.
- V. Was made possible by the Christ.
- VI. Was established upon Pentecost of Acts 2.
- VII. Was entered upon specific conditions.
- VIII. Was variously designated.
- IX. Involved unique relationships.

- X. Worshipped according to the divine pattern.
- XI. Demanded righteous living.
- XII. Was governed by the New Testament.
- XIII. Was organized efficiently.
- XIV. Had a special mission.
- XV. Assisted the needy.
- XVI. Was the way to heaven.

CONCLUSION:

1. We have sought to set forth the composite picture of the New Testament church.
2. We must be exceedingly careful to build according to the pattern.

INTRODUCTORY

In Genesis 6 God instructed Noah regarding building the ark. The "wickedness of man was great in the earth" and God determined to destroy man and beast and creeping things, and fowls of the air. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." In view of the coming flood, God appeared unto Noah and placed upon him the obligation to build the ark. The ark was to be the means of preservation of the righteous. God specified the material out of which the ark was to be made, and outlined in detail the dimensions of it. God thus gave Noah a definite pattern for building. In Genesis 6:22 the Divine record says, "Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

In Exodus 25 God instructed Moses with reference to

building the tabernacle. Multitudinous details and specifications were prescribed—a definite pattern was given. Moses was warned, “And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed to thee in the mount.” Exodus 25:40. In Hebrews 8:5 Paul refers to God’s warning to Moses, “when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, said he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount.” In Exodus 40:16 we read, “Thus did Moses according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.”

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord said “...and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” In this passage the Lord promised to build His church. It is generally recognized that the Lord kept his promise, and that the New Testament sets forth and describes that church.

There are approximately 300 various religious bodies in America only which differ from each other and from the Bible. It is obvious that many are failing to build according to the New Testament pattern. If we are concerned about *building* a New Testament church we must build according to the pattern. If we are *looking for* a New Testament church we must know for what to look.

It is imperative therefore, that we be acquainted with the identifying characteristics of the New Testament church. At this time, we purpose to make a definitive study of the Lord’s church, and thus to answer the question: What is the New Testament church? Since other speakers will be dealing with specific New Testament churches, we shall strive to set forth the composite picture of the New Testament church.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Is a Divine Institution

There are two great divine institutions: the home and the church. Both were instituted for the welfare of man; both are subject to divine rule and regulation. A home which is not built according to the divine pattern does not have God's approval upon it; and a religious body which is not built according to the divine pattern does not have God's approval upon it. Since a human institution could not possibly deal with this problem of sin, of necessity the Lord's church is a *divine* institution. The church is God's dwelling place, God's habitation, Ephesians 2:22; I Corinthians 3:16.

Was Purposed, Planned and Promised by God

The New Testament refers to God's *purpose*. God "... saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own *purpose* and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." II Timothy 1:9. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to *His purpose*." Romans 8:28.

The Lord's *church* was involved in that *purpose*. In Ephesians 3:10, 11 Paul says, "...to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The New Testament *church* was clearly involved in Old Testament *promises*. The first three chapters of Genesis are designed specifically to set forth the *need* for human redemption. Out of the background of this need God makes the first Messianic promise. In Genesis 3:15 he declared that the seed of woman would bruise the serpent's head. The great Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3 definitely involves the Lord and the church. The great promise made to Abraham is likewise made to Abraham's son Isaac in Genesis 26:4. This promise is given to Abraham's grandson Jacob, in Genesis 28:14. In Genesis 49:10 we have the great "Shiloh prophecy" the significance of which is the fact that the Messiah would be a descendent of Judah, the son of Jacob. The promises thus made involve all of the blessings which would accrue through the Christ, His gospel, and His church.

Was Prepared for in Old Testament History

As mentioned previously, Genesis 12:1-3 records God's covenant with Abraham. This is one of the most important of all Biblical events, and from the time of its making, every word in the Bible relates to and is a development of this covenant. From one viewpoint this covenant contained four points: (1) Land, (2) Nation, (3) Name, and (4) Blessing to all. But, from another viewpoint these four points are simply component parts of one thought: God promised to make of Abraham's descendants a great *nation*. Making this great nation would necessarily involve producing a *people*—strong in number, and in character—a *law*, and a *land*. Each of these matters

would involve a *physical* aspect, a *spiritual* aspect, and a *typical* aspect. The Abrahamic covenant was an enlargement upon the Messianic promise of Genesis 3:15, and from the time of the making of this covenant onward, we study about God's people, about their law, and about their land—how God developed Israel into a *great nation*. The points and facts and principles set forth, involving the entire Old Testament, looked forward to, were in preparation for, and were typical of the Christ and His Kingdom—the New Testament church.

Was foretold by the Prophets

The prophets often spoke of the Christ and His kingdom. God, through the prophet Nathan, emphasized that the "House of David" would be established forever, II Samuel 7:16. Isaiah spoke of the time and place of the beginning of the Lord's church, also its influence and provisions, Isaiah 2:2, 3. In specific reference to the Lord as foundation of the church, God through Isaiah said, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Isaiah 28:16. Daniel spoke regarding the time, nature, and endurance of the Lord's Kingdom, Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14.

"And beginning with Moses and from all the prophets" the Lord interpreted to the disciples on the way to Emmaus "the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27. Peter says, "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or

what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them." I Peter 1:10, 11.

Was Made Possible by the Christ

As the Divine Architect God had devised the plan. As the builder, the Lord took the plan and worked according to it. John the Baptist had been given the specific assignment of preparing a people made ready for the Lord. The Lord, during His personal ministry, taught and exemplified the principles which would find application in His Kingdom, His church. The Lord came to fulfill the law and the prophets. Matthew 5:17. He did so (John 17:4; 19:28-30), and thus made possible the new and better covenant. The Lord died in order to make possible remission of sin. Hebrews 9:26. He was raised for our justification. Romans 4:25. He ascended back to the Father (Acts 1:9), and sent forth the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles as he had promised. Acts 1:4, 5; Acts 2:1-4. With this Spirit came power (Acts 1:8), and with this power came the Kingdom of God. Mark 9:1.

Was Established Upon Pentecost of Acts 2

In Matthew 16:18, 19 the Lord said, "...Upon this rock I will build my church ... I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." The Lord thus clearly shows that His church and His kingdom are the same divine institution. To find the establishment of the

kingdom is to find the establishment of the church. And, as noted previously the "Kingdom" would come "with power." Mark 9:1. The Lord promised His disciples that the "power" would come "with the Holy Spirit." Acts 1:8. The Holy Spirit, as promised, came upon the Apostles on Pentecost of Acts 2:1-4. The kingdom would come with the power; power would come with the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit came upon Pentecost of Acts 2. Thus, it is clearly established that the Lord's church (or kingdom) was established on Pentecost of Acts 2.

Was Entered Upon Specific Conditions

The Lord himself, as God's Son, was given the authority to issue the conditions of man's salvation. These conditions were (and are) simple, plain, clear—yet altogether essential.

In Apostolic days the conditions of salvation were as follow: (1) There was preaching of the facts of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection—His Messianism, Acts 2:14-36; Acts 3:13-26; Acts 5:42; Acts 13:16-41; I Corinthians 15:1-4. (2) This preaching was designed to produce faith, Luke 8:12; Acts 15:7; Romans 10:14-17. (3) This faith led men to repentance, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30. (4) This faith led men to confession of their faith in Jesus. Cf. Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9, 10; I Timothy 6:12, 13. (5) This faith led men to be baptized, Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21. (6) This baptism put one *into* the Christ, into His body, into His church—Colossians 1:18; Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:26, 27.

Was Variouslly Designated

The New Testament church was referred to in various ways. One often comes across the terms church, kingdom, body, and temple. The word "church" refers basically to the relationship which the divine institution sustains to the world—it is "called out." The word "kingdom" refers basically to the government characteristics of this divine institution—it is a monarchy. The word "body" refers basically to the unity which God desires to be characteristic of this divine institution—its members must function together in unity, according to the directions of the one Head, as is true of the human body. The word "temple" refers basically to God's dwelling place—here God abides.

The following designations are therefore found in the scriptures (1) "the church" or "churches," Matthew 16:18; Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; Galatians 1:2; II Corinthians 8:1; Revelation 1:4; (2) "The kingdom" Acts 1:6; I Corinthians 15:24; Hebrews 12:28; (3) "church of God" or "churches of God," I Corinthians 1:1; I Corinthians 10:32; I Corinthians 15:9; I Timothy 3:5; I Corinthians 11:16; I Thessalonians 2:14; (4) "kingdom of God," Mark 9:1; Mark 14:25; John 3:3, 5; Acts 1:3; Acts 8:12; Acts 19:8; (5) "kingdom of heaven," Matthew 16,19; (6) "churches of Christ," Romans 16:16; (7) "church of the Lord," Acts 20:28; (8) "kingdom of the Son of His Love," Colossians 1:13; (9) "temple of God," I Corinthians 3:16, 17; (10) "the body of Christ," Colossians 1:11, 24; I Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12; Ephesians 5:23.

Involved Unique Relationships

So far as concerns the individuals who make up the divine, soul-saving institution, they too are referred to in various ways. Yet, each term employed is designed to emphasize a unique relationship. So far as concerns relationship to the "body" these are "members," Ephesians 5:30. So far as concerns relationship to each other, as members of the same family, these are "brethren," as in Colossians 1:2. So far as concerns relationship to the world and consecration to the Lord, these are "saints" as in Romans 1:7. In striving sincerely to be like and to follow the Christ, these are "Christians," as in Acts 11:26. So far as concerns relationship to God, these are beloved "children," as in Ephesians 5:1; and in I John 3.1. Thanks be unto God for all these wonderful relationships.

Worshipped According to the Divine Pattern

In John 4:24 the Lord gave a definite standard for acceptable worship. The Lord said, "God is spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." According to this reading the divine standard for acceptable worship involves three points: (1) Our worship must be directed to God; (2) it must be actuated by the proper motive; and (3) it must be authorized in truth. Thus, acceptable worship involves proper *object*, proper *spirit*, and proper *authority*.

In harmony with this standard the worship of the early church consisted of the following (1) When brethren came together they engaged in a teaching-learning process,

Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7. (2) They sang, Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16. (3) They engaged in prayer, Acts 2:42; I Thessalonians 5:17. (4) Upon the first day of every week they observed the Lord's Supper, Matthew 26:27-29; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23 ff. (5) And, as a matter of Christian duty, brethren were obligated to give of their means as they had been prospered, I Corinthians 16:1, 2; II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9.

Thus was the worship of the early church, and when we worship in like fashion in our day, we are worshipping according to the divine standard.

Demanded Righteous Living

The Lord lived to show us how to live. Christians are obligated to have the "mind of Christ"—to walk in His steps, Philippians 2:5-8; Romans 8:9; I Peter 2:21. We must have His attitude, His thinking, His disposition. The church is "the called out" body. The kingdom is "not of this world," John 18:36. "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world." Titus 2:11, 12.

Was Governed by the New Testament

The Lord was the "Testator" of the *New Testament*, Matthew 26:28. His testament became effective *after* His death, and after having been placed into the hands of His executors—His apostles. For a time the early church did

not have the completed, written revelation, and consequently having and knowing the Lord's will necessarily involved the spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts ceased when that which was "perfect" was come. I Corinthians 13:8-11. Christians walked by faith, understanding that faith came by hearing God's word, II Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17. They understood clearly that the word of God furnished the man of God completely unto every good work. II Timothy 3:16. They understood that God condemned adding to, subtracting from, substituting for, and/or altering in any way—His word. II John 9; I Corinthians 4:6; Galatians 1:9; Revelation 22:18, 19.

Was Organized Efficiently

The New Testament clearly shows that when a congregation of God's people was fully organized according to the divine pattern it had a plurality of men to oversee and direct its affairs. These men were called bishops, overseers, presbyters, elders, pastors, and shepherds. God's plan called for a plurality of elders in every church. Acts 14:23. The New Testament church also included a group of men called deacons. These men were not "overseers," but were special assistants to the elders. These were men upon whom the elders could always depend in the accomplishing of any specific work. In the New Testament congregation an evangelist laboured under the direction of the elders of that congregation. His obligation was to teach and preach, especially in public fashion, both to the saved and to the lost.

Had a Special Mission

The Bible often refers to the value of souls. One soul is worth far more than all the combined wealth of the entire world. Matthew 16:26. The gospel of Christ is God's only saving power, Romans 1:16. The church of our Lord is that which upholds, teaches, defends, contends earnestly for that gospel. I Timothy 3:15. The New Testament church therefore, had as its glorious mission the salvation of the souls of men. This was its *only mission*. To this end (1) the gospel was carried, (2) the needy were helped, and (3) saints were edified.

Assisted the Needy

The New Testament church was concerned about the physical needs of men. The Jerusalem church cared for the needy, Acts 2:44; 4:34, 35; 6:1-6. They were obligated to do good toward all men, and especially toward those of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10. They understood that "pure religion" involved visiting "the fatherless and widows in their affliction." James 1:27. They were instructed to be concerned about "the things needful to the body." James 2:16.

Was the Way to Heaven

The Bible clearly and emphatically teaches that there is a heaven for the righteous. Cf. Matthew 25:46; II Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 4:1, 9; Hebrews 11:16. In John 14:6 the Lord said, "I am the way..." The Lord is the

way to heaven. But, to be in the Lord is to be in His church. Colossians 1:18. Obviously therefore, the Lord's church is *the way to Heaven*. The Lord added to the church daily those that were being saved. Acts 2:47. *All* the saved are in the church; *only* the saved are in the church. The early church understood clearly the essentiality of the church.

CONCLUSION

We have sought to set forth, in the light of God's word, the composite picture of the New Testament church. We have sought to answer the question: What is the church? In view of the facts (1) that this is the picture of the New Testament church, and (2) that God's condemnation abides upon us in the event of departure from His word—we must be exceedingly careful to conform to the divine pattern. If this is what the church was in apostolic days, then this is what the church must be in our day. May God's blessings be upon us as we strive always to build according to the divine pattern.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. For what purpose is reference made to Noah and to Moses?
2. What is the purpose of the present lesson?
3. The Lord's church is what kind of an institution?
4. Romans 8:28; Ephesians 3:10, 11; Genesis 3:15, Genesis 12:1-3, etc. show what basic thought?
5. What would you say about the relationship of the

Old Testament history to the New Testament church?

6. Luke 24:27 and I Peter 1:10 show definitely that the prophets talked about what?
7. When was the New Testament church established?
8. Men enter the Lord's church upon what conditions?
9. Describe the worship of the New Testament church?
10. Is the New Testament church essential to one's salvation?

CAN ONE BE SAVED OUT OF THE CHURCH ?

O. P. Baird

It seems to be the general opinion that a person can be a Christian and be finally saved outside the church. We hear men say, "I am not in the church but I am trying hard to be a Christian." To answer our question we have but to consider what the church is.

THE CALLED OUT

The nature of the church may be seen from a study of the Greek word "ekklesia" which is translated "church." The basic meaning of the word is "the called out." It is defined in Thayer's lexicon: "A gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly. In the Christian sense, an assembly of Christians gathered for worship." I give this merely to show that the basic meaning of the word indicates that the church is a called out or separate group. Many passages of scripture show that the Christian has been called out and separated from the world of sin by Christ through His gospel. All who have thus been called out or separated from sin, or all Christians collectively, constitute the Lord's called out body of disciples. This is the Lord's church on earth. Thus we see that the church is composed of all the saved

and that one cannot be a Christian without being in the Lord's church, for if he is a Christian he is one of the called out.

THE BLOOD REDEEMED

Every Christian has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. The word "redeem" means to purchase back. In salvation a man's soul is purchased by the Lord, "For ye are bought with a price." (1 Corinthians 6:20.) The price is Christ's blood, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18, 19.) No Christian should ever lose sight of the great fact that he was bought by the blood of Christ and belongs to Christ and must, therefore, live for Christ every day. It will keep a Christian humble to remember that Christ has done for him what he could never have done for himself. Man can lose his soul through sin, but he does not have the purchase price for his redemption. Jesus has freely paid the debt for whosoever will accept Him upon the terms which he gave.

The above passages show that the blood of Jesus has purchased every individual Christian. The Bible also says that His blood has purchased the church, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.) This instruction given to the elders

of the church at Ephesus shows that the blood of Christ was shed to purchase the church. This is because every member of the church is purchased by His blood. Thus no one can be a Christian, bought with the blood of Jesus, without being one of those which make up the blood-bought body which is the church.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The church is spoken of in the New Testament as the body of Christ, "And he is the head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1:18.) "For his body's sake, which is the church." (Colossians 1:24.) "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Ephesians 1:22, 23.) Now the following passage states that Jesus is the Saviour of the body or church, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body." (Ephesians 5:23.) Then if he is your Saviour you are in His body or church, and if you are not in the church you are outside the fold.

THE SECTARIAN VIEW

The scriptures given here and many others show that the church the Lord established is the body of all the saved in the world, and that no one can be a Christian outside the church or body of Christ. The true nature of the church as revealed in God's word is quite different from the views of many about the church. The mistaken

ideas are shown in the teaching that one first becomes a Christian, is redeemed by Christ's blood, and at some later time he may become a member of the church. We are told that there are many churches to choose from and that after one becomes a Christian he should join the church of his own choice. There is no Bible teaching that resembles that. (See Ephesians 4:4-6.)

It is also taught that one can be a Christian and be saved eternally without ever being in any church. There is one point on which all agree, and that is that one can be saved without belonging to any one of the denominations or churches founded by men; but the scriptures clearly teach that no one can be saved out of the church the New Testament tells us about, the church the Lord purchased with His blood. This one fact shows that the churches of men are not the same as the church of the living God.

CLEARING SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS

J.A. Thornton

It is so easy to misunderstand. Especially is it easy to misunderstand when our views and attitudes are so different. Many of the misunderstandings in religious matters do not in any way reflect on the honesty or sincerity of the one that misunderstands. We would like to give you some of the reasons that we misunderstand. One of the common reasons for misunderstandings is the lack of information or a failure to make our positions clear. Many times, however, misunderstandings come about because our positions have been misrepresented (may be unknowingly) to the person that misunderstands. Prejudice is another common cause of misunderstandings. These we want to clear in this article.

When we consider the fact that Christ was misunderstood we learn that these misconceptions are not always the fault of the teacher for Christ was the greatest of all teachers. He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again. Then said the Jews, forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days." But he spake of the temple of his body. John 2:19-21. They misunderstood the Christ when he spake of the temple of his body because to them the temple meant only one thing and that was the building

in Jerusalem. From this we learn how easy it is to misunderstand. Let us apply this to the New Testament church and its teaching.

YOU DON'T BELIEVE THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many times have I heard people say "you people of the church of Christ do not believe in the Old Testament." I know they have misunderstood for some reason and it is not our purpose to try to state reasons for this misunderstanding but to clarify it. Let us understand here and now that we do believe the Old Testament was just as much inspired as the New. It is the word of God just as the New Testament is the word of God. When God said to Noah, "make thee an ark of gopher wood," that was the word of God just as much so as John 3:16 is the word of God but we do not build arks of gopher wood today. WHY? There is a reason. This was not written or commanded of us. The Old Testament was written for a purpose, "The law is our school-master to bring us to Christ but after that faith is come we are no longer under the schoolmaster." Gal. 3:23, 24. Paul says we are ministers of the New Testament and that the Old Testament is a vail which is done away in Christ. II Cor. 3:6, 14. The Old Testament still exists just as the command to build an ark of gopher wood exists but neither is binding on us. "A testament is of force after men are dead else it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." Heb. 9:17. Two testaments or wills can not be of force at the same time. A testament is not of force until a man dies, Christ sealed his testament by his death. Before a man's

death he may give freely of his substance but after his death his will is effective. Before Christ's death he could say to the thief, "this day shalt thou be with me in paradise" and it would be so. After his death we must meet the conditions of his will "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mk. 16:16.

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

This statement is made because of a misunderstanding. We believe in the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost just as much as we believe in God or Christ. Because we do not believe the Holy Spirit "compels a person to become a Christ or operate directly on the sinner some think we do not believe in the Holy Spirit. Paul said the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. Eph. 6:17. The word is the medium the Spirit uses to convert. The people on Pentecost were cut to the heart by the Spirit. HOW? Through the WORD preached by Peter and the other apostles. This is true in every case of conversion in the book of Acts. So our difference is not over whether the Holy Spirit operates but HOW the Spirit operates. So never let it be said we do not believe in the Holy Spirit. We believe the Holy Spirit operates in every case of conversion or else there is no conversion but it operates through the word. If I cut a tree down with an axe, I cut the tree but the axe was the medium used. The axe is not I nor I the axe but the axe the medium and I the force behind it. The Spirit is the force behind the word.

YOU BELIEVE IN WATER SALVATIONS

Sometimes they put it this way, "You believe bap-

tism alone saves" This is just another misunderstanding. We do not believe that baptism alone ever saved anyone. We believe that baptism is a conditional cause of salvation just as faith or repentance is a conditional cause of salvation. The blood of Christ is the procuring cause of our salvation. If a young man is in jail and I pay his fine, that is the procuring cause of his release but his release is conditioned on his accepting my payment and leaving the jail. Suppose he refuses to leave the jail, he is still a prisoner. This should help us to understand that the blood of Christ procures our salvation and it is conditioned on our believing, repenting and being baptized. Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16.

In the Old Testament, written for our example (I Cor. 10:11) there is an example that would serve well here. The children of Israel murmured against God and Moses, so God sent fiery serpents into the camp. All that were bitten died. They asked Moses to intercede. God told him to make a serpent of brass and place it upon a pole (This was the procuring cause) and all who looked at the serpent would live (the conditional cause). Suppose some one who had been bitten had said, "I am not going to look, that would be "snake" salvation. That would be like a person calling God's Command to be baptized "water" Salvation. We believe that baptism is only one of the conditions of salvation.

JUST ANOTHER DENOMINATION

Many times we hear people say "the church of Christ is just another denomination." This statement is made

by those who do not understand the true teaching of the New Testament and do not know the position of those who compose the church of Christ. We do not believe the New Testament church was any denomination but was composed of those who had been saved by the blood of Christ. We believe all the saved are in the church that Jesus built because the Lord adds to the church daily those that should be saved. If the Lord fails to add the saved to the church he fails to do what he said he would, but we know he is not slack concerning his promises. If you have been saved the Lord has added you to the New Testament church. That church is the Spiritual body of Jesus Christ. Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24. It is not a denomination and never has been.

In money we speak of denominations of money. Suppose the United States made only one dollar bills (no tens, twenties, etc.) we would not have different denominations of Money. To have denominations of money we must have more than one kind of bills or coins. For Christ to have different denominations of churches he must have more than one kind of church. We know that Christ established only one church (Mt. 16:18) that is the one body (Eph. 4:5; I Cor. 12:20) and that could not have been a denomination. There were many congregations but they were all of the same faith and order, therefore, not denominations. The church of Christ has no denominational name, organization, doctrine, or practice; we have the Bible as our only guide. Suppose ten people are saved and meet for worship without "joining" any denomination. What church are they members of? The one the Lord adds them to, of course. They do not compose

a denomination. This is exactly the picture of the church of Christ—CAN THE BIBLE BE WRONG?

SEND EVERY BODY ELSE TO HELL

Sometimes we hear people say, "you folks claim to be the only Christians, you send every body else to hell." Again they have misunderstood us. Look at the first of this accusation, "You claim to be the only Christians," our real claim is that we are Christians only. The New Testament Christians were Christians only, that is, they were not Catholic Christians, Lutheran Christians, Baptist Christians, Methodist Christians nor Presbyterian Christians but just plain Christians.

The second part of this accusation says "you send every body else to hell." Let us look at this statement. From a literal viewpoint this is an impossibility. Suppose I say some one went to hell, did that make him get there any earlier. Suppose I say he went to Heaven, did that make him get there any earlier. When we preach the Word of God we do not send any one to hell we save them from hell. If one goes to hell he went of his own choice of rejecting the word. Those who preach error are the ones that send people to hell and not those that condemn error.

YOU ARE TOO PUGNACIOUS

Sometimes we hear people say, "You people are always fighting." This is a compliment because Paul said "Fight the good fight of faith." Who causes us to fight?

Those who attack the truth. Suppose every one accepted the truth, we would have no error to fight. If a man says repentance is unnecessary, we preach repentance more. If one says baptism is unnecessary we preach more on baptism. Not because we think baptism is more important but because that is the point of attack. If we fight too much, some one causes us to fight by attacking the truth. When some one says the church is not important and the Bible says it is (Christ died for it. Acts 20:28). Then we must preach more on this subject to show people the truth for that is the point of attack. Who causes us to fight? Those who attack the truth. May God give us the strength and will to always fight for his truth.

We hope and pray that this little artical has helped us to a better understanding of each other. Our prayer is that you will accept the truth and obey the gospel allowing the Lord to add you to the New Testament church. Then worship and serve him all your days and Heaven shall be your reward.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

BELIEVE—Rom. 1:16; Acts 16:30-33.

REPENT—Acts 3:19; 17-30.

CONFESS CHRIST—Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10.

BE BAPTIZED—Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16.

If baptized but not "for the remission of sins" then do as the twelve in Acts 19:1-6.

If you do this the Lord will add you to **HIS CHURCH.**
Acts 2:47.

CONVERSION

Howard Winters

Is your life all that it should be—happy, contented, useful? If not, would you like to make it better and more meaningful?

A dissipated young man, who had divorced his wife, abandoned his child, and sought happiness in dens of vice, became disgusted with himself and exclaimed, "There must be more to living than this!"

A seventy-five-year-old man, who had spent his life enjoying fleshly pleasures, said, "I am so tired of sin."

An alcoholic, with an anguished mind and tortured body, begged, "Please help me! I've got to get out of this hell I'm living in."

All three of these (along with millions of others) had one thing in common: they had found sin out—they had taken their fill of it and had found its fruits bitter. It had promised them a beautiful life filled with fun and frolic, but it had delivered heartaches and miseries with a sure end of eternal destruction. With the utter futility of a life of sin before them, they recognized that God had made them for something better than they had found, for something more constructive than they were doing. And what each needed, what each heart was yearning for, was conversion—conversion to Christ.

Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be con-

verted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3.)

Peter, speaking by inspiration, said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19.)

WHAT IS CONVERSION?

1. Conversion as a change. The Greek word used by Jesus (Matt. 18:3) is **strepho** and it means to turn about (Vine). The word used by Peter (Acts 3:19) is **epistrepho**, a compound of **epi**, meaning upon, and **strepho**, meaning to turn. Webster gives us the first meaning of the transitive verb "convert," "To change; transform; turn; transmute: as, convert grain into flour." To be converted, therefore, means to be turned about or changed. The following will help us see this change (or conversion) in Biblical perspective.

2. Conversion is the new birth. John records the following: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be

born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:1-5.) When one is converted to Christ, he is born again; when he is born again, he is converted to Christ.

3. Conversion is an adoption into the family of God. The inspired Scriptures say, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal. 4:4-7.) Those who are converted to Christ are adopted into the family of God; those who are adopted into the family of God are converted.

4. Conversion is a translation—a transplanting from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. Paul wrote, "Who hath delivered us from the powers of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." (Col. 1:13.) Conversion is, therefore, a change of citizenships—a change from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light; a change from the world to the church, a change from sin to righteousness! a change from self to Christ.

5. Conversion is regeneration. Salvation does not come by human merit. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5.) The word "regeneration" means to begin again. To live in sin is a hopeless state.

But conversion to Christ is a change from the life of sin: it gives one a chance to start a new life. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold; all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.)

6. Conversion is putting off the old man and putting on the new. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:22-24.) This is just another way of saying that conversion is beginning a new life in Christ.

AN EXAMPLE OF CONVERSION

Take for an example of conversion, Saul of Tarsus, later to become the apostle Paul, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." (1 Tim. 1: 13.) He had been trained in the best schools of his day, and was well prepared for a life of service in his native religion. When the first persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, Saul, was one of those "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." He acquired letters from the high priest authorizing him to go to Damascus to seek out and imprison Christians there. But on his way to Damascus something happened that changed the whole course of his life. That change is precisely what we call conversion.

The Lord appeared to Saul in a great light, a light brighter than the noon day sun. "And he trembling and

astonished said, Lord, What wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:6.) Because he was stricken blind, he was led into Damascus, where he spent three days and nights fasting and praying. The Lord sent Ananias to him: "And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:14-16.) "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized...And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." (Acts 9:18, 20.) The Christian hater is now a preacher of Christ; the persecutor is now the persecuted. What made the difference? Conversion.

STEPS LEADING TO CONVERSION

Conversion must not be thought of as passive. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted..." Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted." This makes conversion a command, a command in which the volition of the individual must be exercised in obeying. For this reason we need to consider three vital steps leading up to conversion!

First, one must be taught. The teaching might be done by another individual or one might study the Bible for himself. But there must be teaching. Jesus said, "It

is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." (John 6:45.) And in giving the Great Commission He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15,16.) Without being taught, one would not know that he needed to be converted.

But notice the message that is to be taught. The Great Commission limits what the apostles were to preach as "the gospel." Paul charged Timothy, "Preach the word." (2 Tim. 4:2.) Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) So the first step leading to conversion is that of being taught.

Secondly, when one has been taught the truth, he must face four tremendous facts:

1. Man is lost—lost because of sin. God made man (Gen. 1:27, 28) and placed him in a beautiful garden to dress and keep it (Gen. 2:9-15). He gave him the right to eat of every tree in the garden except one. In forbidding him to eat of it, He said, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:16, 17.) But man disobeyed God (Gen. 3:1-6) and brought sin into the world...and sin brought death. "For the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23.) Since we have all sinned (Rom. 3:9, 23), death has passed upon all (Rom. 5:12). The day we sin is the day we die, the day we are separated from God, the day we become lost.

2. Lost man needs to be saved from sin. Every lost person needs to see himself as "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and with-

[out God in the world." (Eph. 2:12.) When he sees this, he will surely realize that God made him for something better than sin. He is thus brought to see his need of salvation. It is, therefore, the function of teaching to show the one needing conversion the "more excellent way" of Christ. No one is likely to be changed until he sees himself as lost, and no one is likely to see himself as needing to change until a better way is presented to him.

3. A lost man cannot save himself. That is, he cannot provide the means or the plan by which to be saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9.) "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by law." (Gal. 3:21.) Without the intervention of divine grace (unmerited favour), the salvation of lost man would be utterly hopeless. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23)—not in man who is lost to save himself. Thus, when the gospel is preached, man is brought face to face with the facts that he is lost, that he needs to be saved, but that he cannot save himself. This makes the fourth fact, which follows, even more vital for him.

4. Christ came into the world to save sinners—to provide the plan whereby sinners can be saved. Jesus said, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28.) "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) "And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21.) What man

could not do for himself, Christ came to do. He died in man's stead. His death pays the full penalty of sin. But this does not rule out the fact that man has something to do in his own salvation. Quite to the contrary. Lost man must appropriate the death of Christ to his sins by obeying from the heart the form of doctrine which makes him free. (Rom. 6:3, 4, 16-18.) Conversion results from this process of appropriation.

Finally, the third step leading up to conversion is that a lost man seeking to be saved must accept Christ as Saviour. This means that he must accept Him as God's Son, the world's Saviour, and his own Lord. But if Christ is accepted as Lord He must be obeyed. Jesus asked, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46.) Again, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.) And again, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) But even more emphatic, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." (John 14:23.)

We must conclude from this that Christ saves, but He does not save everyone. He saves only those who turn to Him—those who do His will. When one is taught the truth of the gospel, when he faces the facts that he is lost, that he needs to be saved, that he cannot save himself, that Christ came to save, and when he is willing to accept Christ as Saviour, he has been led to the point of conversion (in fact, the process has already started.) The choice is now his. He knows that he is lost, that he needs to be saved, and that Christ came to save. He must make a

decision: he must either turn to Christ (be converted) or remain in his sins. To remain in his sins would be non-conversion (no change); to turn to Christ is conversion.

THE WHOLE MAN

But what is it in sinful man that must be converted? Obviously, if one is to surrender all to Christ, the whole man must be changed. But how? Man has three aspects, heart, life, and relationship. To convert the whole man, each of these must undergo a change. But how is the heart, the life, and the relationship of man changed? We must find the answer to this question in the Bible itself.

1. The heart is changed by faith—the unbeliever becomes a believer. This is, the heart is converted from unbelief to belief in Christ as God's Son. The apostle Peter, speaking of the recent conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity, said, "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9.) The unbelieving hearts had become believing hearts—they were purified by faith. Unbelief had been rooted out. The evidence that produces this change, this faith, is the word of God. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30, 31.) "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom. 10:17.)

When one believes—believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God—he has the power or the right to

become a child of God. John wrote, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1: 12.) When one's heart is changed—changed from unbelief to belief—the foundation for the conversion of the whole man is laid. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6.) But faith alone, faith by itself, does not complete the process of conversion; it only begins it. Faith changes the heart and the change of heart makes possible the change of life and relationship.

2. The life is changed by repentance. Jesus said "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3.)

But what is repentance? The word is a translation of the Greek word *metanoia*, which in turn is composed of two words: *meta*, used in composition with the idea of change, and *noia*, meaning mind. So literally it is a mind-change. Young's Analytical Concordance defines it as "To have another mind." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon says, "To change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins."

But there is another element in repentance which is clearly seen in the New Testament. Jesus said, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." (Matt. 12:41.) The book of Jonah reveals the response of the Ninevites to Jonah's preaching. It says, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way."

Thus Jesus said the people of Nineveh repented when they turned away from evil. In the final analysis, then, repentance is a change of mind which results in a change of life. All who are converted to Christ must undergo this change—the change from the old life of sin to the new life of righteousness. We must conclude then that as the heart is changed by faith, the life is changed by repentance. But neither faith nor repentance, *per se*, changes the relationship.

3. The relationship is changed by baptism. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death...” (Rom. 6:3, 4.) Again, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:26, 27.) The word “into” is a preposition—a preposition of transition. It tells us that the relationship has been changed—changed from outside of Christ (the world) into Christ. Baptism is thus the act of transition, the point where one’s relationship is changed.

When one understands this, when he understands, that baptism changes the relationship (not the heart or the life), when he understands that baptism is the act in which one ceases to be a part of the world and where he is adopted into the family of God, he has no difficulty in understanding the place of baptism in conversion. All the following verses fit naturally into the picture: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16.) “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38.) “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and

wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16.) “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 3:21.) Baptism is the transition act—the act that puts one into Christ, the act that marks the line between the saved and the lost, the act that consummates the conversion of the whole man.

Conversion is, therefore, a change, a change of the heart, the life, and the relationship.

The heart is changed by faith. The unbeliever becomes a believer.

The life is changed by repentance. The old life of sin comes to an end and the new life of righteousness begins.

The relationship is changed in baptism. When one is baptized into Christ he ceases to be a lost servant of Satan and becomes a citizen in the kingdom of God.

To be converted, then, one must believe, repent, and be baptized.

CONCLUSION

Are you a sinner? Are you seeking something better in life than you now have? Are you convinced that Christ offers something better? Do you believe in Him? Are you willing to turn away from your sins? Will you be baptized into Him for the remission of sins? If so, you can be converted and enjoy all the wonderful results of the Christian life. “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” (Joshua 24:15.)

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted.” (Acts 3:19.)

THE NEW BIRTH

Roy H. Lanier

WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH?

1. The Experience Which Brings Us Into the Kingdom.

In John 3:3 Jesus teaches that one must be born anew, or from above, in order to see the kingdom of God. Then in John 3:5 Jesus teaches that one must be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter into the kingdom of God. In each of these verses Jesus is talking about the same thing; therefore, to be "born anew" is the same thing as to be "born of water and the Spirit." There is an experience through which each one of us must pass in order to enter into the kingdom of God, and Jesus refers to this experience as the new birth, or the birth of water and the Spirit. So we simply say that the new birth is that experience by which we enter into the kingdom of God on earth. And since Jesus connected water with that new birth, and the only time water is used in connection with the Christian religion is in baptism, we conclude that baptism plays some part in this new birth. And since birth of water and the Spirit is essential to entering into the kingdom, and since baptism is a part of this new birth, it follows that baptism is essential to our entrance into the kingdom of God.

2. Pentecostians Entered the Kingdom. *A learned*

theological discussion of the new birth would not be as profitable as a practical demonstration of that experience, so we turn to the second chapter of Acts and see how people entered into the Kingdom of God and in this way learn what the new birth is. When Peter and other apostles preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, many who were guilty of the sin of crucifying the Lord believed that gospel and were convicted of their sins. Being thus convicted of sins, they asked Peter and the other apostles what to do for the remission of their sins. Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Then all that received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added to the church about three thousand souls. When believers were convicted of their sins, repented to those sins, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins they entered into the church, which is the kingdom.

But if someone doubts that the church is the kingdom, let him remember that Jesus promised to build a church and to give the keys of the kingdom to his apostles. (Matthew 16:18,19.) Did Jesus build one institution and give the keys of an entirely different institution to his apostles? The fact that he said he would build his church and that he would give the keys of the kingdom to his apostles is proof that the church which he built is the kingdom of God. In Luke 22:29,30 Jesus promised the apostles that they would eat and drink the Lord's supper in the kingdom, but in I Corinthians 11:18ff. Paul teaches us that we take the Lord's supper in the church. Since we are to take the Lord's supper in both the church and the kingdom, and yet we take the Lord's supper in only

one institution, we conclude that the church is the kingdom of God. So when these three thousand on the day of Pentecost entered into the church, they were born into the kingdom of God. We enter the kingdom of God by that experience called the birth of water and the Spirit. So when they believed the gospel and were baptized into the church, they were born of water and the Spirit and entered into the kingdom of God.

3. The Ethiopian Entered the Kingdom. *In Acts 8:26-40 we have the story of the conversion of a man from Ethiopia. When the preacher found him, he knew nothing about Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. When Philip, the inspired preacher, left this Ethiopian, the man was a Christian, a member of the church and a citizen in the kingdom of God. If we study closely the story of this conversion, we will find that he, like the people on the day of Pentecost, believed the gospel which was preached to him, he repented and was baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of his sins, and entered into the church, which is the kingdom of God. So here we have another practical demonstration of what the birth of water and the Spirit means.*

In Matthew 19:23-26 we learn from Jesus that it is difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. He even said that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. But when the disciples heard him say that, they were astonished, and said, "Who then can be saved?" From this we learn that being saved and entering into the kingdom of God are the same thing. All who are saved are in the kingdom of God, and all who are in the kingdom of God are saved. In Acts 2:41,47

we learn that the saved are added to the church. In John 3:5 we learn that those born of water and the Spirit enter into the kingdom, but since being saved and being in the kingdom mean the same thing, it follows that to be born of water and the Spirit simply means to do that which one must do to be added to the church, or to be saved. So, if you wish to be saved, to enter into the kingdom of God, by the experience which is called birth of water and the Spirit, just believe in Jesus as the Son of God, repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of your sins and the Lord will add you to his church, which is the kingdom of God.

WHAT THE NEW BIRTH INVOLVES

1. **A Change of Life.** In II Corinthians 5:17 Paul tells us that if we are in Christ, we are new creatures and old things have passed away, and all things have become new. This simply means that we are in a new relationship, that we have new motives and purposes and desires, and that we will be engaged in new activities for the Lord. Paul tells us in Romans 6:4 that we are raised from the grave of baptism to walk in the newness of life. In Colossians 3:1-4 Paul tells us that if we are raised from baptism with Christ, we are to seek the things above, and not to set our mind or affections on the things that are upon the earth. As a consequence of this new birth, we are to put to death our members which are upon the earth, and we are to put on the new man that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Jesus Christ. The putting away of the old man consists of doing the things Paul

mentions in Colossians 3:5-9, and the putting on of the new man consists in doing the things Paul mentions in Colossians 3:12-17.

2. Complete Surrender to Christ. *Being born again, and becoming a new creature means that we completely surrender our lives to the control of Christ. Before this new birth, we are the servants of Satan and are under his control. (Romans 6:15-22.) We should emphasize that this surrender is to be complete. There are to be no reservations, no areas of our life which we reserve for ourselves. Even our very thoughts and imaginations must be brought into captivity to obedience of Christ. (II Corinthians 10:5-6).*

3. Church Membership. Paul tells us in I Timothy 3:15 that the church is the house or family of God. Since this new birth brings us into the family of God, and since the church is the family of God, it follows that this new birth brings us into the church that Jesus built. We therefore conclude that this new birth involves church membership. There is no such thing as being born of water and the Spirit and remaining outside of the church, but let us be sure to make this distinction: one can be born of water and the Spirit and never enter into a religious denomination, but one cannot be born of water and the Spirit without entering the church which Jesus built.

We have thought in denominational terms so long that the average person can hardly conceive of the word church being used without using it to refer to a denomination, but the word church does not appear anywhere in the Bible to refer to a religious denomination. The word church in the Bible always refers to God's family,

God's people on earth. It is as necessary to be a member of the church that Jesus built as it is necessary to be in the family of God, for that church is the family of God. And that church which is God's family is the only church which Jesus authorizes anyone to believe in or to be a member of. When the people on Pentecost were baptized, they became members of that church which Jesus built. They did not then go and join any denomination on earth. So we today should be members of the church that Jesus built without having any denominational affiliation, but as newborn children of God, we should meet together for work and worship as the early Christians did in Jerusalem and the other communities where the gospel was preached. And we should be content to be members of that church that Jesus built without any denominational affiliation whatsoever.

CHARACTER OF GOD DEMANDS THE NEW BIRTH

1. God's Honour is Involved. *Jesus said, "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3,5.) According to these statements God has taught that no one can enter into the kingdom except he be born of water and the Spirit. Now, if God were to permit some responsible person to enter the kingdom without the new birth, he would be involved in the false statement. Since it is impossible for God to lie, and since he has said that we must be born of water and the Spirit to enter into the kingdom, it follows that if*

anyone should enter into the kingdom without that birth, he would prove God to be false.

2. God's Holiness is Involved. All men sin as soon as they reach the age of accountability. (Romans 3:23). Sin renders a person unfit for fellowship and communion with God. For that reason God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden. When man sins, he not only becomes defiled, but he becomes the servant of Satan. (John 8:34; Romans 6:16.) God cannot, on account of his holiness, have fellowship and communion with an unholy person. For that reason a person must die to the world and the love of the world and must be raised to walk in a newness of life. This is simply another way to say that the individual must be born again or become a new creature in Christ.

3. Wisdom of God is Involved. *The plan of salvation is a product of the wisdom of God. When we humble ourselves and become obedient to God's will we justify the wisdom of God; but if we refuse to become obedient to God's way, we question or deny the wisdom of God's plan of salvation. And if God were to permit an individual to enjoy fellowship and communion with God without being born of water and the Spirit, God would be proved to be unwise in demanding that new birth.* •

CHARACTER OF CHRIST DEMANDS THE NEW BIRTH

1. Appropriate His Offering For Sin. The birth of water and the Spirit is that experience in which we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin. He taught that,

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.” (John 3:14,15.) In this passage Jesus taught that his death on the cross was necessary in order that we might in him have eternal life. But, if one can be saved without the new birth, he can be saved without accepting Jesus Christ as his offering for sin. Since Jesus taught that we can have eternal life only on the condition that we accept him as our offering for sin, it follows that if one can be saved in heaven without the new birth, he need not pay any attention to Jesus Christ and his offering for sin.

2. The Authority of Christ is Involved. *Since Jesus taught that the birth of water and the Spirit is essential to our acceptance of him, and the appropriation of his sacrifice for salvation from our sins, it follows that if one can be saved without being born again, he can pay no attention to the authority of Christ. To neglect or reject the teaching of Christ is to despise the authority of Christ. To try to be saved without the new birth according to the teaching of Christ is therefore to despise the authority of Christ and try to go to heaven without bowing to his authority. No one who believes the Bible to be the word of God can conceive of our going to heaven while disregarding the authority of Jesus Christ. Hence, we see the absolute necessity of the birth of water and the Spirit.*

CHARACTER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT DEMANDS THE NEW BIRTH

1. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict people

of sin. (John 16:8.) He does this work of conviction through the preaching of the gospel. (Acts 2:36,37.) When a person is convicted of sin, he feels the need of salvation from sin, and wishes to know what to do to be saved. (Acts 2:37,38.) This planting of the word in the heart and bringing conviction of sin to the heart of the believer is the work which the Holy Spirit does in the "birth of water and the Spirit." So the individual who tries to be saved without the birth of water and the Spirit rejects and despises the Holy Spirit in the very work which the Holy Spirit is supposed to do in his salvation. To follow God's plan of salvation we must allow the Holy Spirit to do his work of convicting us of our sins, and to try to be saved without allowing the Holy Spirit to do his work of conviction is to reject God's plan of salvation and to be finally and utterly lost.

2. **Sanctification by the Spirit Involved.** *Paul tells us that we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:16.) In this work of sanctification, as in the work of conviction, the Holy Spirit uses the word of God as his instrument. (John 17:17; Ephesians 6:17.) So to try to go to heaven without the new birth is not only to reject the Holy Spirit in his work of conviction, but it is also to reject and despise the Holy Spirit in his work of sanctification. If one can go to heaven without the new birth, he can go to heaven without being convicted of sin or being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

THE SOCIETY OF HEAVEN DEMANDS THE NEW BIRTH

In his visions on Patmos, John saw a great multitude

which no man could number out of every nation under heaven and heard them singing. "Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Revelation 7:10.) When the question was raised as to the identity of this great multitude of people, John was told; "These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The society of heaven is a blood-washed society. It is composed of people who have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. We learned above that we appropriate that blood to our own cleansing when we are born of water and the Spirit; hence, the society of heaven is composed of people who have been born again. If one should go to heaven without being born again; he would be a misfit among this bloodwashed throng. Hence, for our own happiness and the service we may render here, and for our happiness in the world to come, it is absolutely necessary that we be born of water and the Spirit.

SOME COMMON OBJECTIONS TO BAPTISM

Rubel Shelly

Many sincere and good people raise objections to the view that baptism in water is essential unto salvation. And far be it from any believer to be so arrogant or un-Christian as to dismiss those objections as the mere ravings of prejudiced or ignorant minds! These are sincere objections which deserve to be weighed carefully and answered honestly.

In this brief study we shall take up some of the objections which are most frequently heard with regard to the essentiality of baptism unto the remission of sins.

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

Some individuals object to the essentiality of baptism because the thief on the cross was saved without being baptized. I have even heard people say, "You go ahead and be baptized if you want to, but I am going to be saved like the thief was saved!" Now surely there is no doubt in any of our minds but that the penitent thief who was crucified with Jesus was saved from his sins while on his cross. It is equally sure that Jesus did not take him off that cross and baptize him. If this be granted, then why insist that people today should be baptized?

The conditions surrounding the salvation of this man are altogether different from those of anyone who is alive today. He lived under the law of Moses, we live under the New Testament. He lived during the time of Christ's earthly sojourn—before the gospel became the binding will of Christ. It is a commonly known fact that a man's will is not legally in force until after his death. This was certainly the case with Christ and his will! The writer of the book of Hebrews spoke of this very matter with regard to the New Testament and said, "For a testament is of force where there have been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth." (Heb. 9:16-17).

The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ did not become binding upon men until he had died. And the thief was saved before the death of Jesus! Therefore it follows that he was saved under a different law than that under which we live. His case cannot be taken as an example of conversion for men like us who live under the new covenant.

Jesus had the right during his public ministry—and exercised it frequently—to save men under whatever circumstances or conditions he saw fit. Matthew records an event in his ministry when a palsied man was brought unto the Lord for healing. Before Jesus gave physical healing to him, he first healed his spirit by saying, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." (Matt. 9:2). And Luke records an incident which occurred in the house of a Pharisee named Simon when a sinful woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. In response to this outpouring of love, the Lord told her, "Thy sins are forgiven," (Luke 7:48). These cases are

similar to that of the thief on the cross in that Jesus did not require the persons involved to be baptized or meet any other condition before saving them. Upon a demonstration of their faith in and love for him, he bestowed salvation on them without any further qualification. Someone may be ready to ask, "If it is true that the Lord saved these people without requiring them to be baptized, why can not I be saved without baptism?"

The answer to that question lies in the fact that all these people were saved during the time of our Saviour's personal ministry before the gospel had been made known and had become binding upon men. Baptism as a condition of salvation is a part of the "Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ" and was not universally binding on men until after he died. The palsied man, the sinful woman and the thief on the cross all lived before Christ died and therefore none of them were subject to the requirements of salvation which are bound in the New Testament.

Perhaps an illustration will clarify the matter further in your mind. Suppose you were to write the Internal Revenue Service a letter saying: "I refuse to pay any more income taxes! George Washington and Abraham Lincoln did not have to pay income taxes, yet they were considered loyal Americans. Since that is true, I can refuse to pay my taxes and still be a loyal American!" You immediately see the flaw in this type of reasoning. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln died before our income tax laws went into effect. They lived at a different time under altogether different circumstances! We live at a time when income tax laws are binding on American citizens and must therefore abide by that law in order to

be loyal citizens of our country.

Do you see the point of this simple illustration? The thief lived and died before the will of Christ went into effect. Therefore he was never subject to its conditions. But we live under his will and must subject ourselves to its conditions in order to receive its benefits. You cannot be saved like the thief was saved because you do not live under the same circumstances as he did. If you are saved, it will have to be through the provisions of Christ's will—the gospel. And one of the stipulations of his will is that men be baptized in order to be saved! "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16).

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

Another objection which is sometimes heard to baptism being essential involves the conversion of the Philippian jailer. "The Jailer was saved without being baptized," it is said, "for Paul simply told him to 'believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.' If he didn't have to be baptized, then neither do we."

But look at the story of the jailer's conversion more closely and you will see that it in no way contradicts the position which has previously been set forth concerning baptism unto the remission of sins.

Paul and Silas had been put into jail because of false charges which had been brought against them by certain evil men in Philippi. Around midnight a great earthquake shook the prison-house and opened its doors and loosed the bonds of all the prisoners. The jailer in charge

of this prison-house and its inmates rushed out and expected to find that everyone had escaped. To his surprise, Paul, Silas and the other prisoners were still in their cells although freed from their shackles. The jailer immediately acknowledged Paul and Silas as men of God and admitted his need of salvation. He asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Now read the answer to his question and the account of the events which followed: "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God." (Acts 16:30-34).

The jailer was not saved without baptism. He was baptized in the middle of the night by the two men whom he had helped thrown in jail! And it was only after he had been baptized that he "rejoiced greatly." And it was only after he had been baptized that the New Testament credits him with "having believed in God." Now if baptism was not a part of his salvation from sin or if it was only incidental to it, why was it considered so urgent? Why did they not wait until morning when it would have been more convenient to baptize? And why did baptism make such a difference in the way the jailer and the other members of his household felt? Was it not because of their knowledge that their sins had been washed away in baptism? (Cf. Acts 22:16).

This example of the jailer's conversion to Christ is a

most excellent example of the nature of saving faith. When this man asked what to do to be saved, he was told to believe on Christ. Some have taken this to mean that he was saved by his faith alone. But saving faith is not faith alone! (Cf. James 2:24). As an inquiring sinner, the jailer was told to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." But this was a request with which, in his present condition, he could not comply. He could not immediately profess faith in Jesus, for he knew nothing of him! And "faith cometh by hearing" says Romans 10:17. So, in order that he might believe, Paul and Silas preached Jesus unto him. In the process of the preaching they commanded him to be baptized, for when they had finished their sermon the jailer was baptized immediately.

Now this story shows the serious mistake that people make today when they (teach that salvation is by faith alone and that baptism is not an essential part of God's plan to save. Salvation is not an either-or proposition in which a person must choose between salvation by faith and salvation by baptism. It is not a matter of saying "Yes" to one and "No" to another. Instead, each includes the other! There can be no baptism without faith and there can be no faith without baptism. Salvation is received by means of both faith and baptism. Neither is valid without the other!

The jailer did have to be baptized in order to be saved. And if we follow his example of faith in the Lord Jesus we will also be willing to submit to this requirement of the gospel.

I JUST CAN'T SEE ANY CONNECTION.....

But someone says, "I simply cannot see any possible connection between being baptized in water and being saved from my sins!" Although I am sure that people who make this objection to baptism do not *mean* to be implying it, this statement *actually does imply* that the power of God depends on human understanding for its efficacy!

Naaman could not see any possible connection between dipping in the Jordan River and being cured of leprosy. (Cf. 2 Kings 5). And because he could not see any logical connection between the two he almost missed his only chance to be healed! But, at the urging of a loyal servant, he did what the prophet had commanded and was totally and immediately healed of his leprosy! God's power to confer a blessing has never depended on man's ability to understand how he does it!

Jesus once made clay by spitting on the ground and annointed the eyes of a blind man with the clay. He then sent the man to the pool of Siloam to wash and the man who had been born blind "came seeing." (John 9). Was the power in the saliva? Was it in the dirt at the particular place where the blind man was sitting? Was it in the waters of the pool of Siloam? It was in none of these, but in God!

Naaman was not healed by the waters of the Jordan River, but by the power of God! The man born blind was not healed by the clay, but by the same power of God! Why, then, was Naaman commanded to dip in the Jordan River seven times? And why was the man born

blind told to submit to the anointing of his eyes with clay and to wash in Siloam? Their faith was being tested! God has always required that men demonstrate their faith by positive acts of obedience. In many cases the thing he required of the individual as a demonstration of faith had no logical connection with the blessings promised. (Cf. Heb. 11:1-12). But therein lay the test! If men could logically reason themselves into doing everything that God requires of us, where would faith enter the picture? God tests our faith by giving commands which we may not understand. And one of these faith-testing commands is the command to be baptized! If we could understand the connection between baptism and salvation it would not be an act of faith, but of "sight" or human devising. If we accept only such things in religion as we can fully understand, we will eventually accept nothing at all! For with our limited understanding we cannot understand how there can be an eternal, perfect and omnipotent person such as God! Therefore we had better be careful not to reject anything—including baptism—simply because we cannot see how it could be connected with salvation!

It is not the water involved in baptism that saves a person, for baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh." (1 Pet. 3:21). It is not what the preacher says at the time of one's baptism that saves an individual from sin. Rather it is the total submission of the person of the will of God which is signified by his baptism into Christ that secures salvation. God's Word promises that sins will be washed away at the time of one's baptism and if a person will believe that promise and submit to

baptism—in spite of the fact that he cannot see how or why God does it this way as opposed to some other—he will receive the remission of his sins! (Cf. Acts 22:16; 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21).

MY MOTHER WAS NEVER BAPTIZED

The final objection which I raise for consideration in this lesson is perhaps the hardest of all to deal with. It is entirely subjective and personal in nature and must be approached differently from the other objections which have been considered. It is sometimes expressed like this: "My mother (father, wife, etc.) was never baptized for the remission of sins and I would be condemning her if I were to be baptized!"

Your mother and father were probably never vaccinated against polio or influenza. Does that mean that you should refuse these safeguards against disease? Of course not. "Oh, that is different," someone says, "because my parents simply did not have the opportunity to take these vaccines. They didn't understand about germs and viruses and how to be protected against them. I do not dishonour them simply because I know something that they did not know about protection against disease!" You are right, of course. But is this really different from the matter of baptism for the remission of sins? Perhaps your parents did not have the opportunity to study this matter as thoroughly as you have been able to study it. No child ever dishonoured or condemned his parents by doing what he had been convinced was the right thing to do.

A child honours his parents by doing what he knows is right. He reflects credit on the character of parents who trained him to be honest with his own heart and to follow the truth wherever it led him. Think of it in this way: Would you want your children to be bound by your present knowledge? Do you want them to never learn anything that you have not had the chance to learn? Do you want them to do in their generation only such things as you have been able to do in yours? Of course not! Surely this is the way that your parents must have thought about you!

CONCLUSION

Some people are prone to make light of baptism and its place in the plan of God. But how many other subjects are spoken of as many times in the Bible as baptism? There are more than one hundred references to baptism in the brief book which God has given to us to show the way from earth to heaven. If baptism was important enough that God saw fit to refer to it that many times, we would be very foolish indeed to dismiss the subject as one of no consequence to our salvation!

And while it is true that many sincere and good people raise objections to the essentiality of baptism unto salvation, the Word of God nevertheless remains the same. It teaches that baptism is a condition of salvation. In the course of this lesson we have studied some, but by no means all, of the objections that people make to baptism unto the remission of sins. The objections which have been discussed and the scriptures which have been cited

should have been sufficient to answer some of the questions which are in the minds of some of you who have studied this lesson. And the truth that baptism is required of men who would be saved from their sins should be clearly established in your minds.

Don't let anything stand in the way of your obedience to the gospel of Christ. You know what the Lord requires of you for salvation. "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). Don't postpone your obedience to the gospel even one more day! "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:2).

WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM?

Homer Putnam Reeves

It's impossible. In Bible contemplation, no such thing exists. What is commonly referred to as infant baptism grew out of the false and highly repulsive dogma of infant guilt and infant damnation.

There is no authority in the sacred scriptures for the ridiculous practice—not even a hint. There is not a single example in the Bible; not one.

Baptism is a given act, to be submitted to by a given person, for a given purpose. Do infants qualify? Certainly not.

Baptism is immersion in water. (Rom. 6:4). Baptism is much more than immersion. One can immerse a stick, but a stick cannot be baptized. Obviously, one can immerse a baby, but a baby is not a subject of baptism. Note the syllogisms:

Christ made teaching a prerequisite to baptism. "Go ye therefore and make disciples of (teach) all nations, baptizing them . . ." (Mt. 28:19). Infants cannot be taught. Therefore infants are not subjects of baptism.

Faith is necessary to scriptural baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mk. 16:16) Infants cannot believe, hence cannot be baptized.

Repentance must precede baptism. "Repent ye, and

be baptized every one of you . . .” (Acts 2:38). Infants cannot repent—have nothing to repent of. Therefore infants cannot be baptized.

Baptism is for (in order to procure) remission of sins. “Repent and be baptized . . . unto the remission of your sins.” (Acts 2:38.) Infants have no sins to be remitted.

Baptism is an act of obedience. “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins . . .” (Acts 22:16.) Infants cannot obey.

Baptism is the interrogation of a good conscience toward God. (1 Pet. 3:21.) Infants have no conscience. Therefore infants cannot be baptized.

One is saved by baptism. Noah and his righteous family were saved through water, “Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism.” (1 Pet. 3:21). Infants can’t be saved. They have nothing to be saved from. They are safe.

“THE RELIGION OF MORALITY”

Harold Hazelip

There is probably no religious system today which commands a greater following or is more widespread than the religion of morality. Perhaps you ask, “The religion of morality? What’s that? I don’t believe I have ever heard of that one.” The religion of morality is the idea that a man may be saved by a good moral life, without obedience to the Gospel of Christ, and without being a member of the body of Christ. This religion is not a denomination, and it does not build church buildings. But there are millions of people who are trusting in morality for salvation. They tell us, “Be a good moral man. Practice good citizenship. Treat your family well. Be a good neighbour, and you’ll go to Heaven.”

But what does the Bible teach about this religion of morality? Every religious question needs to be studied in the light of God’s Word, because the Bible is God’s perfect rule. Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32). If the Bible teaches that morality alone is enough, then God has spoken; but if the Bible teaches that salvation demands more than a good moral life, God has still spoken, and His testimony is still true, regardless of the number of people who are trusting their good moral lives for salvation.

THE CASE OF CORNELIUS

The Bible teaches that morality alone is not enough; we must be converted to Christ! For example, we have the case of Cornelius, a man of whom we read in Acts 10th and 11th chapters. Acts 10 opens with a description of his character: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." Here is a man who should be saved by morality alone if anyone can be. He was devout, or reverent in his attitude toward religion. He feared God with all his house—a Gentile, but a believer in the true God. He was benevolent: he gave much alms to the people. And he was a prayerful man.

Here is the way his servants described Cornelius to Peter: "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feared God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee . . ." (Acts 10:22). This is quite a tribute to Cornelius. Palestine was part of the Roman empire, and the Jews despised Roman rule. Their cherished hope was to throw off the Roman yoke. Yet Cornelius, an officer in the Roman army, was still "well reported of by all the nation of the Jews." He must have been a very good man, far better morally than many members of many churches.

HIS MORALITY WAS NOT ENOUGH

But the Bible teaches that Cornelius was lost! One

day Cornelius saw a vision. In this vision, an angel appeared to him and said, "Cornelius, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God . . . Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." (Acts 10:4; 11:13-14). Cornelius, though an excellent man morally, was to be saved by the words which Peter preached to him. Peter's sermon begins in Acts 10:34 with the words, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." He continued with an account of Christ's life, death and resurrection. Cornelius heard the word, believed it, and in Acts 10:48 we are told, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Here is how a good moral man was saved: he heard the Gospel, believed it, and was baptized in obedience to Christ's command in the Gospel.

If the example of Cornelius teaches anything it teaches that a good moral life is not enough. Many people believe that if they live upright lives, they will go to Heaven without obeying the Gospel, but the Bible teaches that they are mistaken. This does not minimize the importance of morality, but it does indicate the limits of morality. Morality is essential to Christian living, but morality alone is not enough to make one a Christian.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE RELIGION OF MORALITY

Let us now pass in our thinking to a consideration of

the consequences of the religion of morality. Let us suppose for a few moments that a person could be saved by merely living a good moral life. What would this mean? First, if one can be saved by a good moral life, he can be saved without a Saviour. We can live good moral lives without Christ. There were certainly good moral lives before Christ came into the world, and there continue to be good moral lives among those who do not know of Christ. If men are saved by virtue of morally upright living alone, then the necessity of a Saviour is eliminated. But what does the New Testament teach? The angel announced to the shepherds on the night of Christ's birth, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11). Jesus certainly taught that men must have a Saviour. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: *no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6). The Apostles also emphasized the necessity of a Savior: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). These Scriptures not only teach that man is in need of a Saviour, but that Christ is the only Saviour. There is no other way to the Father except by him. Now Let us note the contrast. The New Testament teaches that we cannot be saved without Christ. The religion of morality says that we can be saved without Christ if we will only live good lives on our own. One of these is wrong!

MORALITY ALONE ELIMINATES HIS BLOOD

If a person can be saved by his good moral life, he can be saved without the blood of Christ. It is one thing to live a good moral life; it is quite another thing to be washed in the blood. If it is enough to live a good life from man's point of view, then it is unnecessary to be washed in the blood. The New Testament teaches that it was necessary for Christ to die for us, because "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22). In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39). If it had been possible for men to be saved by their own goodness, and without the blood of Christ, would God not have heeded this fervent prayer and spared the death of Christ? Death is the penalty for sins, and either we had to die for our own sins, or someone had to die for us. Christ died in our stead. The brightest Jewel of Heaven "tested death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9). The Apostle John writes of the Christians, "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." (1 John 1:7). Now, I ask you: Could all this have been in vain? Did Christ shed His blood for nought? Yet when someone says, "I live a good moral life and I'll be all right," you remember that this actually means, "I can go to Heaven without the blood of Christ." These are the consequences of the popular religion of morality.

MORALITY ALONE ELIMINATES FAITH

If one can be saved by the religion of morality, he can be saved without faith. There are many people who live good lives without faith in Christ. The Jew, generally speaking, does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, yet he may live a good moral life. The Modernist rejects the deity of Christ, denies His virgin birth and His resurrection, and yet he may live a good moral life. Such men may live as upright morally as many followers of Christ, but will they be saved without faith in Christ? The New Testament teaches, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6). In John 8:24, Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Many other Scriptures urge the necessity of faith in Christ. In John 3:16, we read, "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." Paul and Silas commanded the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31). There can be no doubt that the New Testament requires men to believe in Christ in order to be saved. But, please remember that every verse which teaches that faith is essential to salvation teaches that morality alone is not enough to save our souls.

RELIGION OF MORALITY OMITTS OBEDIENCE

If one may be saved by morality alone, he can also

be saved without obedience to Christ. Paul wrote the Church at Thessalonica that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Thess. 1:7-9). In Hebrews 5:8-9, we are reminded that though Christ was God's Son, "yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." If one can be saved by morality alone, he can be saved without being born again. But Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). If we can be saved by morality alone, we can be saved without being baptized into Christ. But the Apostle Paul wrote, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26-27). The religion of morality is wrong because it leads men to believe they can be saved without obeying God.

MORALITY . . . BUT NOT MORALITY ALONE!

Thus we have seen four consequences of this religion of morality and I hope you will ponder them well before committing your soul to the idea that a good moral life will by itself fit you for Heaven. If one can be saved by a good moral life, He can be saved: without Christ, without

the atoning blood of Christ, without faith in Christ, and without obedience to the commandments of Christ. The New Testament teaches that all of these are essential to salvation. The case of Cornelius certainly shows that a man with excellent morality still cannot be saved without conversion to Christ.

The religion of morality is not enough! This does not mean that morality is not essential to prepare the child of God for Heaven. The child of God must live a good moral life to be saved, but morality alone *will never make one* a child of God. We *must obey* the Gospel to become children of God, and we *must be children of God* to go to Heaven!

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TONGUES

Franklin Camp

When I first began preaching the Holiness people claimed to be able to speak in tongues. I had several debates with them on this question. They taught that one was saved and then should seek "a second blessing" which was supposed to be the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues as evidence of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I debated one Holiness preacher that claimed he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit and could speak in tongues. The truth was that he could hardly speak English, much less a tongue (foreign language) and he could not read at all. He had to have some one else read his scriptures for him throughout the debate. It was not difficult to show he had not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and could not speak in a "tongue."

There were three groups in the New Testament that could speak in tongues. 1. The apostles that were baptized in the Holy Spirit. 2. The ones in the church that received this gift by the laying on of the apostles hands. (Acts 19:1-6; Acts 2-1-4). 3. Cornelius received the Holy Spirit directly and spoke in tongues. Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:15. The apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit for inspiration. We have no living apostles today and no inspired men. We have an inspired book the Bible. This eliminates any today receiving the baptism of the

Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as the apostles did. The second group received the gift of speaking in tongues through laying on of an apostle's hands. (Acts 8:11-19; Acts 19:1-6). This gift was one among several miraculous gifts that belonged to the early age of the church while the New Testament was being written. If the gift of tongues continue, then all the other miraculous gifts continue, for they all were for a special purpose during this period. To claim to speak in tongues, while not claiming any of the other gifts is false on the very face of the claim. We do not need the other gifts. They have fulfilled their purpose. The same is true of speaking in tongues. In the next place, we have no living apostles to impart the gift of speaking in tongues. To claim to speak in tongues today, apart from the impartation of the gift by an apostle, which is impossible, indicates either ignorance of the scripture or a lack of respect for what the Bible teaches. In either case one would be disqualified as a teacher. Third, Cornelius spoke in tongues as evidence that he had received the Holy Spirit directly, and not through the hands of an apostle. He received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues to prove that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as Jews. "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:8-9) This happened only one time. It accomplished its purpose. The gospel is being preached to Gentiles. None are receiving the Holy Spirit as Cornelius did and therefore none are speaking in tongues as he did. Here are the three groups that spoke in tongues in the New Testament. Each

group did it for a special purpose which was limited in time and scope. There does not live the man that can prove that we have a single one of these needs in the church today and therefore not one of these groups can be found in the church. **THERE ARE NONE IN THE CHURCH THAT SPEAK IN TONGUES** today.

But some may claim that the tongue in First Corinthians 14 was not a language and can be practiced today. It is pure assumption, and false at that, to claim that the tongue of 1 Cor. 14 was not a language. Where is the proof that it was not a language? The word "unknown" is in italics which shows that it is not in the original. It simply reads "a tongue." In the next place, the ones in Corinth not only spoke in tongues, they prayed in a tongue and sang in a tongue. Read verses 14,15,16. When the tongues, (language) was used in an assembly where people did not understand the language they could not say "Amen." This shows that they prayed in a tongue. Third, Paul said he spoke in tongues "more than ye all." (14:18) Paul was an apostle. Where is the proof that his reference to his speaking in tongues—note the plural—was any different than that of the other apostles in Acts 2. But the tongues of Acts 2 was a language. (Acts 2:6). In the next place Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11,12 and makes a double application of it. The tongue and lip of verse 21 refers to the language of the Assyrians. The Jews did not understand their language. Then it is used in a figurative sense in reference to speaking to the Jews through their captivity. But again this shows that the tongue of 1 Cor. was a language, not jabbering.

The Holy Spirit through Paul said, "whether there be

tongues, they shall cease.” (1 Cor. 13:8). If we have any in the church today that speak in tongues it would certainly be by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, shall we believe what the Holy Spirit said through an inspired apostle, or shall we accept the claim of the so called tongue talkers today? Both cannot be right. It is either Paul or modern day claims. W.E. Vines comments on this verse as follows: “The gift of tongues was about the first to be discontinued. All attempts to re-introduce it are EITHER FRAUDULENT OR THE OUTCOME OF DECEPTION; THEY ARE CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE, AND ARE VOID OF THE ACTUAL OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.” Paul said they would cease. He said that what he said was the commandment of the Lord. (1 Cor. 14:37). He further said that any man that rejected what he taught was an indication of ignorance and he should be considered as such. (1 Cor. 14:38).

A few in the church that claim to speak in tongues look on it as a superior spirituality. What is the truth about this claim? Well of course it is false but look at what the Bible teaches on this very subject. The only discussion of the use of tongues, when they were actually capable of speaking in tongues, is in this chapter to the church at Corinth. They prided themselves on this particular gift. What was their spiritual condition. “Ye are yet carnal” and “babes in Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:1-4) The very congregation that claimed to thrive on speaking in tongues was the least spiritual of all the congregations that had letters written to them. What a strange paradox. Tongue talking today is supposed to be a sign of spiritua-

lity, but the one congregation in the New Testament that really went in for tongues, when it was possible to speak in a tongue, is the least spiritual of any of the congregations mentioned in the New Testament. If tongue talking produces spirituality, Corinth should have been the most spiritual, but it happened to be the very opposite. The emphasis in Corinth on tongues indicated a POOR SPIRITUAL CONDITION. What do you think all the ado about it in the church proves today. Certainly not superior spirituality.

In each instance where the gifts are listed—1 Cor. 12:8-10; 12:27,28; 12:29,30—tongues are put right at the end. The order of the other gifts are varied but tongues always comes out at the end. If tongues indicates superior spirituality why did Paul put it so far down on the list. If a church ever needed spirituality Corinth did. If tongue talking would help spirituality this would have certainly been the place to put it at the head of the list. Paul put it at the bottom. What would you conclude as to its relationship to spirituality?

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge—to another divers kinds of tongues.” Even when there were miraculous gifts all did not have a gift of tongues. But if tongues was a sign of spirituality, they must have aided in spirituality. Why limit this gift to some? All need spirituality. Verse 30 says, “But covet earnestly the BEST GIFTS.” This shows that tongues was not even to be desired as one of the best spiritual gifts. Finally, in this chapter where Paul deals with the question of spiritual gifts it is indeed remarkable that in every single mention of tongues it is

compared UNFAVOURABLY WITH PROPHECY. Since prophecy was placed first in importance, if any of these gifts were intended to continue beyond the miraculous age, would it not have been prophecy instead of tongues? If I were going to be foolish enough to try to claim any of these gifts today I would select the best one, not the least gift. Divine wisdom placed them in this order. Sensible men know they would be acting foolish to try to claim to prophesy and everybody would know it was a false claim. Deceived men can jabber and call it speaking in tongues and people without any Bible knowledge will accept it. But those that believe the Bible have no desire to claim to speak in tongues and know that the ones that make such a claim are just deceived.

DO NOT FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLY

Guy V. CASKEY

To understand and profit from this lesson, it is essential that you read carefully Hebrews 10:23-32.

Having begun the Christian life, there is nothing more vital or important to the continuation of that spiritual existence, than that we be faithful to God. The inspired writer of Hebrews first exhorts us to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (10:23). To help us know what he is saying to us and apply it to our lives in these modern times, let us read this language of the New Testament in speech such as we use: "Let us, without ever wavering, keep on holding to the hope that we profess" (Williams). The New English Bible renders this verse: "Let us be firm and unswerving in the confession of our hope."

The phrase "Let us hold fast" literally means "to hold in a firm grasp, to have in full and secure possession, the confession and the promises which we have openly and solemnly avowed to God." In the process of our becoming Christians, we confessed that we believed in our hearts that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God. We were baptized into him and arose to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3, 4). The apostle admonishes us to be steady, firm, unmoved and unwavering in our faithfulness to this great acknowledgment and all that it implies. The tragedy

in the church today is that many have begun the Christian life filled with enthusiasm, love and resolution; but they have not "held fast." Their interest has waned from those first days; their goal has become clouded and obscure; their values undergo change and assume a twisted and distorted shape and their vision reverts to the attractions of this world. Though there is no way to estimate accurately how many Christians there are who are not really faithful in their private and public duty to the Lord, it is likely a conservative guess that fully one half of those who have been "baptized into Christ" are not now "holding fast."

Paul discussed this same problem and used a similar admonition to the Colossians: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel..." (1:23.) This says to us that a Christian must remain true and steadfast, firm and immovable in the faith. He must have "staying power"; he must persevere, never abandoning his duty and never allowing himself to be shifted away from the gospel.

Luke continues to show how tremendously important it is for the Christian to be faithful in his service to God by relating the example of those very first disciples who were baptized on Pentecost: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42). It can help one immeasurably, individually, as a child of God, and the cause of Christ, generally, if he will take heed to this divinely approved example which God intended to serve as a standard after which to pattern our own conduct. "And they continued steadfastly..." The sense and sig-

nificance of this is: "To persist in adherence to a thing; to be intently engaged in; to attend constantly; unremitting continuance to a thing; to be devoted to" (Thayer). In this we have the secret, the answer, to our strength and growth. The Twentieth Century New Testament translates this verse, "They were regularly present"; Weymouth renders it, "And they were constant in attendance"; and the New English Bible presents, "They met constantly." Churches in this country are weak because there is not this sense of loyalty and constancy among the members. Congregations are small because they have lacked devotion and steadfastness in worship and service to God.

CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO BE FAITHFUL

There are two very obvious reasons that come to view; when Christians read the New Testament, why they should be faithful to God. First, it is necessary, or requisite, to our salvation. I should like to make this so clear that it will be perfectly understood by all who read this with an open heart. Our faithfulness to God in worship, with other Christians to honour Christ, constitutes the absolute essence, the fundamental nature of our religion.

If we are not faithful, our religion is make-believe and hollow mockery. Much preaching is done by us about faithfulness, but where is the practice? Jesus said: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10). When he drew a picture of the judgment in Matthew twenty-five (25), the blessings of eternal life were dispensed to the faithful—to those who were reliable, dependable and trustworthy. They had proved

through life that they were sound and faithful servants of Christ. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Matt. 25:21). In the second place, Christians ought to be faithful because God has been faithful to them. Our text says, "for he is faithful that promised" (verse 23). We can be sure that he will not fail us, as so many of us have failed him. There is no question but that he will do what he says. "God is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). God is utterly dependable and entirely trustworthy. Are we? "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). He will not fail you, but he will keep his promise, fulfill his vow and complete his work. Out of gratitude for what he has done for us, and his faithfulness to us, we should be faithful to him.

DO NOT FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLY

The Authorized, or King James Translation, of verse 25 reads: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." This is quite clear enough for all to see. There is no blur nor dimness in this language. But the original speech of the New Testament, and more modern translations, make the truth of this passage more easily understood, more sharply defined and more unmistakably distinct. Knox: "Not abandoning our common assembly"; Berkeley: "Not neglecting our own church meeting"; New English Bible: "Not staying away from our meetings"; Phillips: "And let us not hold aloof from our

church meetings." The language of the inspired writer of Hebrews is even more positive. Mr. Thayer says this is "a gathering together in one place, the religious assembly of Christians"; and that we are not to "abandon or desert" it. With this many other scholars agree, such as Arndt & Gingrich, Abbott-Smith, and W.E. Vine. Arndt & Gingrich and Vine add the thought, "do not leave behind."

James Moffatt, reputable scholar, translator and historian, says that there were a number of reasons why, in that day, many Christians were absent from the assemblies of the saints.

1. Some were deterred in their attendance by fear of persecution. There are yet some places in the world where it is dangerous for Christians to meet together to worship God. Some of God's people were so strong in that day that they met in caves and dense of the earth to observe the suffering and death of Christ by eating the Lord's Supper. Even when they were discovered by opposing heathen authorities, they would still partake of the bread and wine in the knowledge that the soldier's bow was drawn to send an arrow through their heart. O, that we had Christians with this conviction in our time.

2. Moffatt says some were absent because they felt no interest in it. Christ died, for them, rescued them from the bondage of sin, gave them the Lord's Supper and commanded them to observe it each week to keep alive in their hearts the memory of his suffering and death on their behalf. But they felt no interest in it. This describes the attitude and temper of so many members of the church in the 20th Century. They forsake the assembling of them-

selves together because they couldn't care less. I frequently make inquiry about the absence of a well-known member of the congregation only to be told that he (or she) stayed at home, or was having company or had gone visiting. To miss the memorial of the death of Christ does not seem to give them any concern at all—not even the slightest twinge of conscience.

3. The historian said that many had doubts about the necessity of these regular Christian assemblies. Two thousand years have passed and people are still arguing about the necessity of faithfulness, trying to excuse their disinterest and misconduct. But it is very poor defence in the face of the divine mandate of God: "Do not forsake your coming together..."

4. Another reason why some Christians defected from God's service and absented themselves from worship was that they were engaged in business. Times have not really changed. Some are too busy today to meet regularly with the brethren to worship and praise God and to remember the sacrifice of his Son. Frequently, I drive many miles to meet with my brethren in various congregations over the country. This is a great pleasure to meet and worship with others of "like precious faith." Often some of those brothers and sisters I have met on former occasions are absent from the Lord's service. Questions of concern are asked about them. It is possible that illness could have kept them from worship, and sometimes this is the case. But disappointment and depression fill my heart when I learn that some 'good sister' did not come to worship this Lord's Day morning because she is preparing Sunday dinner, and some 'good brother' is engaged in the pursuit

of his business. Is this faithfulness? Is this true Christianity? With such people, Christianity is a side line; they are simply playing at the highest and noblest calling in the world, somewhat like children 'play church.' They remind me of the occasion when Jesus came to the ruler's house to raise his daughter from the dead. He said, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn" (Matt. 9:24). I believe that a Christian who forsakes the assembly to prepare food for family or friends or to attend to his personal business is "laughing Jesus to scorn"! I think it is the equivalent of chuckling (smiling) at his death, ridiculing his sacrifice and showing disrespect for the very purpose of his coming into the world.

WHAT SIN IS FORSAKING?

Is one guilty of sin if he deliberately stays away from the house of God, and does not, with other Christians, commemorate the suffering and death of Christ by eating the Lord's Supper? The Hebrew writer names three grievous, deplorable sins of which a Christian becomes guilty when he forsakes the assembly.

1. He has trampled underfoot the Son of God (10:29).

In ancient times when an enemy was defeated, the victor would literally trample him underfoot. He would step roughly and tread triumphantly upon him. To the multitudes, this was a kind of game, and they shouted their approval and took pleasure in the success of their army over the adversary. Jesus used this word "trample" in Matthew 7:6, "Neither cast your pearls before swine,

lest they trample them under their feet, and then turn and attack you." When one intentionally and purposely forsakes the assembly of the saints (whether to prepare food, visit friends or attend to business), he has done to Christ what the hogs do to precious pearls when they trample them in the muck and mire and filth of the hog pen. Do you believe you can do this to Christ and escape the displeasure and punishment of God?

2. He is guilty of counting the blood of Christ as common (10:29).

This term denotes "violation." He has "violated the blood of the covenant." He has abused and treated with irreverence the blood Jesus shed on the cross. You see, the Christian is supposed to drink the memorial of his blood upon the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25, 26). If he neglects to do this, he has debased and vulgarized and made common, cheap and ordinary the blood of Jesus Christ shed for his sins. I am afraid that too many Christians have not considered the seriousness of their sin of carelessness and indifference. It is fraught with fearful and eternal consequences.

3. He has despised the spirit of divine grace.

When a child of God deserts these meetings, the Hebrew writer uses a word which means that the guilty person has "insulted" God. He has had contempt and reproach and disdain for the grace which procures his salvation. It is not possible for one to deliberately commit these sins against Christ and escape damnation. His only hope is in genuine repentance and turning back to God before it is too late.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THOSE WHO FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLY?

The text of our lesson lists the terrible consequences of those who are guilty of wilfully sinning in this way.

1. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (10:26).

There is no further sacrifice left to be offered for our sins. This inspired man seems to be saying that when we abandon the meetings of the congregation [that is, the worship of God in memory of Christ's death for us] that this is the same thing as rejecting the only sacrifice we have. There is no other.

2. The deserter has nothing to look forward to except "the fury of fire which is to consume the enemies of God" (10:27).

It is no light matter, therefore, that we keep ourselves away from the gathering of the saints and the worship that not only honours Christ, but keeps alive in the heart of the Christian the gift of God's love to us. This is the source of our strength and hope, and God will not tolerate our slackness in this duty. To be remiss in this obligation, to omit with carelessness the performance of this pleasant task, is to invite disaster. God will bring into judgment those who are guilty of such irresponsible and negligent conduct.

3. A more severe punishment shall be received by the one who defects from the assembly than those who transgressed Moses' Law and died without mercy.

It is difficult for us to imagine, in the times in which we live, a man being shown no mercy. In the Western

and democratic countries of the world, the tendency today is to ignore sin, to treat those indulgently who are guilty of crime and violence, and to excuse the action of the criminal on the grounds of environment or heredity. God never looked at sin in this way. While he is a God of love and mercy, of compassion and condescension, let us not lose sight of the fact that he is a God of justice also. The violaters of God's law under consideration in the lesson of Hebrews chapter ten will receive a "sorer" punishment than those who were found guilty of infraction of the law of Moses and were dragged outside the camp and stoned to death.

4. **He calls upon the disobedient to remember that "vengeance belongs to the Lord" and that "God will judge his people and recompense" (10:30).**

There is the human inclination to count our own failures as unimportant, not serious enough for God to take note of them. And there is also the inclination that in the passing of time, God will forget our transgressions. But our lesson teaches that God does not forget, that our sin of neglect and indifference will be remembered in the judgment (unless they are forgiven by our repentance and reformed life), and that he will pay back in like kind.

5. **"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31).**

This verse has a very strong import. The sense of it is: "It is a dreadful, terrifying and awful experience to fall into the hands of the living God, and incur the divine penalties for disobedience. It is not very pleasant to contemplate the results, the outgrowth, of one's neglect.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO THOSE WHO FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLY?

Paul issues a strong charge, a command, with reference to those who shirk their duty: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly..." (2 Thess. 3:6). This is not an action left to our choice, the performance of which we may or may not do. This is an order from the mouth of an apostle. An order to do what? To withdraw from a brother who is neglectful of his duty, one who is irregular (Thayer). Bullinger says that the word "disorderly" means, "not in one's place; hence neglectful of duties." Arndt & Gingrich say that Paul speaks of "irregular religious services." There are many people who claim to be Christians and who would feel insulted if you inferred they were not Christians, who are described in the words of these scholars. If those Christians(?) who are neglectful of their duties, who are irregular in worship to God, and who are not in their place, were withdrawn from, as Paul commands, many people in this country would be affected. Such correction needs to take place without delay. If the church would exercise discipline upon those who "walk disorderly," as the Lord directs it to do, there would be greater spirituality among its members, more respect for it in the eyes of the world, a deeper devotion and purity within its ranks and a more widespread influence that would guarantee its strength and growth.

AN EXAMPLE TO IMITATE

James A. Garfield was president of the United States

of America, taking office March 4, 1881. On his first Sunday in Washington after his inauguration, a member of the cabinet insisted that a meeting must be called to discuss a matter that threatened a national crisis. The President refused on the grounds of another appointment. The cabinet member then insisted that the national matter was of grave importance, and that Mr. Garfield should break his engagement. But Mr. Garfield refused to do so. Then the cabinet member remarked: "I would be interested to know with whom you have an engagement so important it cannot be broken." President Garfield replied: "I will be as frank as you are. My engagement is with the Lord, to meet Him at His house at His table at 10:00 o'clock tomorrow morning, and I shall be there."

May God help us to be so dedicated to Him!

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

William L. Davee

"Is instrumental music in Christian worship approved by God?" This is the question under consideration at the present time. This question is not a new one; it has been before people of many centuries during this gospel age. It is the purpose of this lesson to set forth four propositions with their proof to show that instrumental music in Christian worship originated with man rather than God, that it is sinful in God's sight because it goes beyond that which is written, and that, as Christians, it is our duty to oppose its introduction into the worship of the church of the living God.

I. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP ORIGINATED WITH THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.

The church in the days of apostolic authority did not use instruments of music in their worship unto God. Their introduction came about hundreds of years after the establishment of the church along with the gradual departure from the word of God that also took place in the organization and doctrine of the church that finally resulted in the great apostate church, the Pope of Rome,

and the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope. Instrumental music in worship was introduced by the authority of the Pope of Rome and not by the authority of God. In proof of this statement, let us notice the following articles from the historians:

Chamber's Encyclopedia (Art. Organ)—"The organ is said to have been first introduced into church music by Pope Vitalian I in 666. In 757 a great organ was sent as a present to Pepin by the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine Copronymus, and placed in the church at St. Cornelle at Compiègne."

Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (Art. Organ)—"In the Greek church the organ never came into use. But after the eighth century it became more and more common in the Latin church; not, however, without opposition from the side of the monks. Its misuse, however, raised so great an opposition to it, that but for the Emperor Ferdinand, it would probably have been abolished by the Council of Trent. The Reformed Church discarded it: and though the Church of Basel very early reintroduced it, it was in other places admitted only sparingly, and after long hesitation."

Other historians could be quoted to prove that instrumental music was not admitted into church music until long after the time of the apostles, but the above are sufficient for all who will accept truth to prove they were introduced by man and not by God. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

II. THE GREAT RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS OF MANY FAITHS HAVE OPPOSED INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHURCH WORSHIP.

It is not our purpose to try to prove instrumental music in worship to be wrong by what man has said. The following quotations are introduced as supplementary evidence to show that the world's greatest religious scholars have opposed the use of instrumental music in worship unto God.

Martin Luther (Founder of Lutheran Church) said: "The organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal."

John Calvin (Founder of Calvinism) said: "It is no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of tapers, or revival of the other shadows of the law. The Roman Catholics borrowed it from the Jews." (Com. on Psa. 33).

John Wesley (Founder of the Methodist Episcopal Church) said: "I have no objection to the organ in our chapels provided it is neither heard nor seen." (Clarke's Com., Vol. IV, page 684, Amos 6:5).

Adam Clarke (greatest of Methodist commentators) said: "I am an old man and an old minister, and I here declare that I have never known instrumental music to be productive of any good in the worship of God, and have reason to believe that it has been productive of much evil. Music as a science I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of

the Author of Christianity.” (Clarke’s Com., Vol. IV, page 684, Amos 6:5).

Charles H. Spurgeon (one of the greatest of Baptist scholars, preached for twenty years to 10,000 people every Sunday in the London Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle, and the use of instrumental music was never allowed to enter the worship during that time.) When Spurgeon was asked why he did not use the organ, he gave as his answer, 1 Corinthians 14:15, and said “I would as soon pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.”

Alexander Campbell (Christian) said: “To all whose animal nature flags under the oppression of church service, I should think instrumental music would not only be a desideratum but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But to all spiritually minded Christians such aids would be as a cowbell in a concert.”

J. W. McGarvey (Christian) said: “We cannot adopt the practice without abandoning the only ground upon which a restoration of New Testament Christianity can be accomplished.”

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES ONE TO SING, BUT DOES NOT TEACH BY COMMAND, EXAMPLE, OR NECESSARY INFERENCE THAT ONE SHOULD PLAY ON AN INSTRUMENT IN WORSHIP.

(Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26)—“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”

(Acts 16:25)—“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”

(Rom. 15:9)—“For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.”

(1 Cor. 14:15)—“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

(Eph. 5:19)—“Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

(Col. 3:16)—“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

(Heb. 2:12)—“Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

(Heb. 13:15)—“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

(James 5:13)—“Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.”

In every case the command is to sing—never to play upon an instrument. This is a specific command as to the kind of music and thereby excludes all other kinds of music. When God specified “gopher wood” to Noah in building the ark, that excluded all other kinds of wood. When God specified “lamb without spot or blemish” to the Israelites, that excluded the pig or any other kind of

animal. In like manner, when God specified "singing," that excluded instrumental music.

IV. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IS CONDEMNED BY ITS SILENCE AND OMISSION FROM GOD'S WORD.

We are commanded to worship God "in spirit and in truth" (Jno. 4:24). God's word "is truth" (Jno. 17:17). Therefore, we are to worship Him according to His word. Instrumental music is not according to His word; therefore, it is not worshipping God "in spirit and in truth."

Everything we do in word or deed is to be done in the name or by the authority of the Lord (Col. 3:17). Instrumental music used in worship is not by the authority of the Lord; therefore; we are not to use it.

Christ sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth (Jno. 16:13). He did not guide them to use, or teach the use, of instruments of music in worship; therefore, they are not part of the truth.

Christ sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles to bring all things He had taught them to their remembrance (Jno. 14:26). He did not remind them to use, or teach the use, of instrumental music in worship; therefore instrumental music was not taught them by Christ.

Paul said, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). He did not declare unto them that they were to worship God by playing upon an instrument in worship; therefore, instrumental music in worship is not part of the counsel of God.

“Whosoever transgresseth (goeth onward) and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 Jno. 9). instrumental music in worship is going beyond that which is the doctrine of Christ; therefore, those who use instrumental music in worship have not God.

Paul says the Scriptures furnish one completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). They do not furnish one to the use of instruments of music in worship; therefore, instrumental music is not a good work.

Peter says that God “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 pet. 1:3). He did not give us instrumental music; therefore, instrumental music in worship does not pertain to life and godliness.

CONCLUSION

We have shown that instrumental music in worship unto God in this Christian age had its origin with man and not with God, that we have only commandments to sing praise unto God, that instrumental music is condemned by its silence, and that scholars of all ages have opposed its use in and introduction into church worship. This should prove conclusively to the honest inquirer that it is wrong to add this commandment of man to God's Holy Word.

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the word of the book of this prophecy, God shall

take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18, 19).

It is our desire and prayer that this lesson will be accepted in the spirit in which it has been presented so that we might come to the unity for which Christ prayed. (Read John 17.)

THE WARNINGS OF GOD

J.C. Choate

In modern times, man has developed a warning system in relation to fire, weather conditions, and various forms of security that has been the means of saving untold property and lives. There have been cases where destructive cyclones and floods resulted in very little loss of life because the local residents were informed early enough so they could escape certain tragedy. In other instances, lives have been lost simply because there was either no warning or the warning went unheeded.

Likewise, the Bible is a book of warnings from God to man. God knows man, knows his needs, knows what's best for man, and therefore, he is able to look out for him and to advise him on what to do and not to do. When he listens and responds to God's advice, then he is going to reap the benefits. But when he closes his eyes and ears and refuses to take heed to the warnings given 'then he must suffer the consequences. (Romans 11:22).

God instructed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that they should not partake of a certain fruit. Listen to what the record says: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:16, 17;

3:2, 3). Of course we know the story, how Eve was tempted by the Serpent and she ate, and then she gave to Adam and he ate. (Genesis 3). The result was that man and woman sinned against God and death followed.

In Genesis 6:5-8 we read how God saw all of the wickedness of man and as a result he was even sorry that he had made man. His solution was to destroy everything that he had created on the face of the earth. There was one exception, and we read, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." We also read how God warned Noah that he was sending a flood, and that he should therefore prepare an ark that he and his family might be spared, along with a specified number of animals. (Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:10). Then Noah preached to the people of his day that they might enter the ark and be saved, but refusing to take heed, they were all destroyed in the flood. (2 Peter 2:5).

The Lord warned that he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness. Abraham pleaded on their behalf, knowing that Lot and his family were there, and perhaps other righteous people. The Lord continued to give in to Abraham until they got down to ten righteous people. Had there only been that number there then the Lord would not have destroyed those great cities. But when ten were not to be found, then two angels went into Sodom to warn Lot and his family to get out before fire and brimstone would be rained down on them. (Genesis 19).

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and before his return to his Father in heaven, he commanded that the gospel should be taken into all the world, saying,

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Then he warned, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15, 16). Also read Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 10:32, 33; and Luke 13:3.

Paul warned that those who come preaching another gospel will have the curse of the Lord resting upon them. (Galatians 1:6-9). Christ said that if we add to his word, or subtract from it, that we will be punished for it. (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Christ promised to build his church (Matthew 16:18), and indeed he did according to Acts 2. Since then many churches have been planted but all such people should remember that Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” (Matthew 15:13). That just means that any and every church that had its beginning with man will eventually be destroyed. If you are a member of a church that you cannot read about in the Bible, then you need to get out while you can.

While Jesus lived on the earth he promised that he would come again. (John 14:3). Paul said that Christ would come and take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Peter declared that the heavens and the earth will be burned up, and Christ said that the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire. (2 Peter 3:7-12; Revelation 21:8).

So my friends, we have been warned. If we are wise we will listen and act upon the advice the Lord has given in love. We have more than enough examples showing that what he says, that he will do. When we do what God has asked us to do then he will bless us. When we choose to do otherwise, we are reminded that “the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23).