

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

"And He is the head of the body, the church"

According to the Bible, Christ is the head of the church. There is, therefore, no human head of the church on earth. (Col. 1:18). Christ is the only head of the church. He rules His church, which is His spiritual body on earth, through His New Testament. No man on earth has the authority to govern the church of Christ on earth. Most people though do not even understand what the church of the Bible really is. When the subject of the church is discussed, one thinks of a physical building in which people gather together on Sunday for worship, and a modern dictionary too defines the word church in that fashion. In the New Testament of the Bible, however, the word "church" is never used to convey such a meaning.

The English word church is a transliteration of the Latin word "chirche" which was used in lieu of the Greek word "ekklesia," the actual word used in the New Testament. The word "Ekklesia" means "the body of citizens or the assembly of people". When we read from an English Bible today what Christ had said in Matt. 16:18: "upon this rock I will build my church," Christ had used the Greek word "ekklesia." Also, the term "church," (ekklesia) and "the kingdom of heaven," or "kingdom of God" were interchanged by Christ in Matthew 16:18 & 19. Notice, speaking to Peter, Christ had said, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah for flesh and blood had not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven, and

I also say to you that you are Peter (Greek—Petros, pebble or stone), and on this rock (Greek—Petra, ledge of rock) I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Notice, reader, that in the same statement where the Lord promised to build His church He also promised to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And He said that not even hades could prevent Him from doing that. And then, notice, again, that a few breaths later, in the same chapter, in Matt. 16:28, He promised the coming of the kingdom during the lifetime of the apostles. He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." (Also see Mark 9:1). So what do we learn from this? We learn that the church of Christ is the earthly form of the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God.

We also need to remember how Christ, in His conversation with a Jewish leader, had told him that unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). This is the new birth, the baptism in water described in Acts 2:37-47, after which the Lord had added the obedient to the Church. The Holy Spirit, Who in the beginning had inspired the Men of God in the writing of the Scriptures instructs us what we must do to be saved and thus to become members of the church of Christ and citizens of God's Kingdom (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16). We read, in 1 Cor. 12:13, "... by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." That is to say, by learning what the Spirit of God had taught, as we read in the Bible, we are all baptized into one body. The body, according to Ephesians 1:22, 23, is the church.

So we need to remember, that the church according to the Bible is NOT a material building or a house of prayer. But the church of the Bible is the spiritual body of Christ, composed of people who had obeyed His gospel and He is the head of His body, which is also His spiritual kingdom. An individual enters the kingdom of heaven and the church of Christ at the same time and by the same process. When the believers in Christ had repented of their sins and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, as they were instructed, they were added by Christ

Himself to His church (Acts 2:38-47). Paul, the apostle, put it in these words, in Colossians 1:13, "He had delivered us from the power of the darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." The church of the Lord exists, and so does His kingdom. One who is in His church is also in His kingdom. Millions of people around the world are therefore ignorantly praying today the so-called "Lord's prayer," uttering, "Your kingdom come." The Lord had taught this prayer of example to His disciples in the beginning when His church or His kingdom was not established. That church or the kingdom was going to be established during the lifetime of His apostles to whom He was speaking at this time, as we have observed. Today both the church and the kingdom, which are the same, exist, and anyone can become a member of the church of Christ or the kingdom of God by believing in Christ and obeying his command to be saved.

Why We Call On The Name Of The Lord

J.C. CHOATE

The scriptures speak a number of times about calling on the name of the Lord. Let us notice some of these. In the long ago, Joel prophesied, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." (Joel 2: 28-32).

After the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles, and they had begun to speak in other tongues or languages, those present began to jump to various conclusions as to how they were able

to do that. Some thought that they were full of new wine. Then we read, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2: 14-21).

In the prophecy that Joel gave in the long ago, and in its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem, it is obvious that it had to do with the death of Christ, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and the coming of salvation. All of this was happening in the last days, those days that followed the death of Christ. The Hebrew writer said that God would speak to man by his Son in the last days (Hebrews 2: 1,2), and Christ spoke in those early days through the Apostles, and since that time he has spoken to us through his word as revealed in the New Testament. Concerning that which Paul preached, he said, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1: 12). Concerning what John had seen, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, he said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Revelation 1: 3).

Thus in Acts 2 we have the record telling us that after the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Apostles that they preached concerning the coming of Christ the miracles that he did to prove that he was from God, of his death, burial, and resurrection, and of his return to the Father in Heaven to sit down at the right hand of God to reign as King of kings and the Lord of lords. On hearing

these things then some three thousand were cut to the heart and they wanted to know what they should do. The record continues, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2: 38-42).

Now let us notice several things here. First of all, Peter makes mention of the Lord calling people. How does he do that? Paul told the Christians at Thessalonica, "Where unto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus." (2 Thessalonians 2: 14). In other words, they had been called through the gospel that Paul had preached. What was that gospel? In Romans 10: 15 it was good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and the salvation that was made-possible because of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4). Furthermore, there were conditions of the gospel that had to be met in order for one to be saved. One of those conditions was that one believe in Christ. Another was that one repent of his sins. And finally, there was the condition that one should be baptized for the remission of his sins. Now all of this was preached in Acts 2, that is, the Apostles preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and when some three thousand became believers and wanted to know what else they should do, then they were told as believers that they should repent of their sins and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Through the preaching of the gospel then, the Lord was calling on them to obey him. As mentioned, some three thousand answered that call, and obeyed the Lord, and he in turn saved them and added them to his church.

Second, it was prophesied by Joel that the day would come that whosoever should call on the name of the Lord would be delivered or saved. Peter and the Apostles told the people on the

day of Pentecost that that prophecy was being fulfilled at that time. What did it mean then to call on the name of the Lord that they might be saved? Many have said to call on the name of the Lord means to ask him for salvation. In other words, they would equate calling on the name of the Lord with prayer. But where is prayer mentioned in relation to salvation? Actually, after Christ had been preached, and they were cut to the heart, or had become believers in Christ, then they wanted to know what they should do. Then Peter told them that they should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. The record goes on to say that some three thousand did this and then the Lord added the saved to his church. We would therefore conclude that to call on the name of the Lord in this case means to obey the Lord. Another way of putting it, Christ promised that when one or more obeyed him that he would save them. (Mark 16: 15,16). Therefore, on obeying the Lord one is simply calling on the Lord through his obedience to request him to keep his promise to save him. Naturally, he does.

Third, it was prophesied that the day would come that the Lord would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. He kept that promise, and continues to keep that promise, I might add. On the day of Pentecost he poured out his Spirit, or baptized the Apostles with the Holy Spirit, and through them, all the world would be blessed through their preaching, and in the recording of the Lord's word, as directed by the Holy Spirit. Then all who obeyed the Lord, as a result of their preaching, were not only saved, but they also were given the Holy Spirit. This was not only for those on the day of Pentecost, but also for their children, or future generations, and those who were afar off, that is, the Gentile population. A little later Cornelius and his household were baptized with the Holy Spirit to prove that the Gentiles were accepted of God as well as the Jews. In addition to the Apostles and Cornelius and his household receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles were authorized of the Lord to lay their hands on selected ones that they might also have the power of the Holy Spirit. All others received the ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, or the non-miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit, and that has continued on down to our time. Thus the Lord has fulfilled these prophecies, and his word has been kept in every instance.

On another occasion, Paul wrote the Romans, "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10: 8-17).

In the scripture just read please notice that again the writer refers to that of calling on the name of the Lord that one might be saved. What is involved here? From the context we see that the word of God must be preached, that one must hear it, believe it, confess Christ, and although repentance is not specifically mentioned here, and neither is baptism, nevertheless, it would certainly be a part of preaching the word of God and in believing in the Lord. This would have to follow to be in harmony with all of the cases of conversion listed in Acts, and the many other passages of scripture that have to do with salvation. But the point is, that when one obeys the Lord, again he is calling on the Lord to keep his promise to save him, and of course the Lord never fails. Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3: 9).

Have you called on the name of the Lord for salvation? No, we are not talking about prayer here necessarily. We are concerned with that of obeying the Lord. If you will call on him through your obedience to his will then he will respond by saving

you and adding you to his church. There is no other way to be saved.

If we can be of assistance to you in any way then please let us know.

Will God Accept Your Baptism?

BOB DANKLFSEN

CONFUSION OVER BAPTISM

For many years I was confused over the subject of baptism. God's Word was saying that there is "one" baptism, (Ephesians 4:5), yet I knew that there were churches teaching and practicing different baptisms. For the sake of my own soul's salvation, I began to research this most vital subject. The research helped me to become a Christian after finding that my former response was not Biblically founded.

BAPTISM—FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?

Jesus asked this question, "The baptism of John whence was it; from heaven or from men?" (Matthew 21:25). Note how the Jewish leaders of that day responded. "And all the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him, (Luke 7:29, 30). Since it is clear that the Lord is the author of baptism, it is important to find God's purpose for it and how it is to be performed.

THE GOSPEL—KEY TO THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, (Mark 16:15). What is this gospel or good news? It is the message of God coming to earth (1 Timothy 3:16) to become man, (Galatians 4:4). This God-man after being tempted in every way man can be tempted, (Hebrews 4:15) voluntarily took the punishment we deserve on the cross even though He never once sinned. He was buried and rose victorious from the grave the third day. Paul says this is the gospel, (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This one, who is still God, (Hebrews 1:8) and man, (1 Timothy

2:5) sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven interceding for Christians, (Hebrews 7:25). Some day He promises to come back to judge mankind, (Acts 17:30, 31) at the resurrection, (John 5:28, 29). Peter stood up, on the day of Pentecost and preached the gospel to those who had earlier cried "Crucify Him!", (Acts 2:22-24). Many asked what to do to be saved, (verse 37). Peter responded, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (verse 38).

OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

Faith is the link between the gospel and baptism. Faith in the scriptures was never a passive act within the individual himself, but rather an outward demonstration of his belief. For example, God saw demonstrated in the life of Noah, obedience in the building an ark, exactly as commanded, (Genesis 6; Hebrews 11:7). The Lord counted him as righteous because of his obedience, and does the same for the individual who obeys God to become a Christian today, (Romans 6:17,18). The heart of the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The Lord asks a true believer in the gospel to reenact that event in water. "Or are you ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His *death*? We were *buried* therefore with Him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was *raised* from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life," (Romans 6:3,4). Incidentally, when one refuses to reenact the burial by immersion, it is counted as a rejection of Christ's burial. The same word describing what happened to Christ, *buried*, (1 Corinthians 15:4) is the way the believer submits to being lowered in water in this faith expression, (Acts 8:38; Colossians 2:12).

The person who insists on following man-made customs such as sprinkling has refused to repent. Repentance is a change of mind which means if a person discovers a new truth from God's word, even though it is contrary to what he previously understood to be true, he accepts it without reservation. I know many who are too proud to admit they might be wrong—so they will go to their grave refusing to do God's will (Acts 17:30,31). I personally rebelled against God for three months before I came to a point of repentance on the subject of baptism.

WHY THERE IS NOT MORE THAN ONE BAPTISM

The following teachings are found in some of the major religious groups today:

1. Man is saved by grace only, without faith, repentance, or baptism—Primitive Baptist.
2. Infants are forgiven of sin when they have water poured on them—Catholic.
3. Infants have water sprinkled on them and are saved later when they become believers—Methodist.
4. Infants are immersed to be saved from sin and later become believers—Greek Orthodox.
5. Adults believe and are saved and later have water poured on them—Mennonite.
6. Adults believe and are saved and are never baptized—Salvation Army.
7. Adults believe and are saved and then may be immersed later—Baptist.
8. Adults must believe and be immersed to be saved—Church of Christ.

All these groups use the Bible and some claim that that is all they use. It is obvious they cannot all be correct especially since the scriptures teach there is only one faith and one baptism, (Ephesians 4:5). Which of the above is correct? God's word will give us the answer. Read Mark 16:15, 16; Acts. 8:35-39; Hebrews 10:22; and Romans 6:3, 4. A thorough investigation should reveal one must first believe, and then be immersed in water to be saved.

GOD'S WORD REVEALS THE PURPOSE FOR BAPTISM

1. *New International Version*: "Repent and be baptized . . . so that your sins may be forgiven."
2. *Williams* (Baptist): "You must repent and as an expression of it, every one of you be baptized . . . that you may have your sins forgiven."
3. *New American Standard*: "Repent and let each of you be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of your sins."
4. *American Standard*: "Repent ye, and be baptized . . . unto the remission of sins."
5. *Amplified*: "And Peter answered them, Repent—change your views . . . and be baptized ... for the forgiveness of your sins."

TRANSLATIONS CLARIFY HOW ONE IS BAPTIZED

1. *Emphasized*: "Repent ye and be immersed . . . unto the remission of your sins."
2. *American Bible Union Version* (Baptist): "Repent and be immersed every one of you . . . unto the remission of sins."
3. *Better Version*: "Repent and be immersed every one of you ... in order to the remission of sins."
4. *American Bible Union* (1858): "Reform and be immersed every one of you ... for the remission of sins."
5. *Living Oracles*: "Reform and be each of you immersed ... in order to the remission of sins."

There are at least ten translations in the English language that translate the Greek word *baptizo* as immerse. Most translators chose to transliterate (change the spelling from the Greek *baptizo* to *baptize* for the English) rather than translate; however, this does not change its definition, which is to dip, submerge, immerse or overwhelm. All translations without exception convey the message of immersion in Hebrews 10:22, "Let us be sincere in heart and filled with faith, our minds sprinkled and free from any trace of bad conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" New Jerusalem Bible Catholic.

LEXICONS (GREEK BIBLE DICTIONARIES) CONFIRM THE MODE

1. *Thayer*: "Baptidzo"—(1) Properly to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge. (2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water.
2. *Lidell and Scott*: "Baptidzo"—to dip in or under water; of ships to sink or disable them. (2) Metaph, soaked in wine, overhead and ears in debt; being drowned with questions or getting into deep water. (3) To baptize. Mid., to dip oneself; to get oneself baptized.
3. *Wahl*: "Baptidzo" (from *bapto*—to immerse; more frequently, to immerse in New Testament.) To immerse (always in Josephus, Ant. IX 10,2, etc. Polyb. etc.) Properly and truly concerning sacred immersion.

Note: not one lexographer ever defines the word baptidzo, from which we get the English word baptize, sprinkle or pour. Every translation, incidentally, translates the parent word "bapto" dip in Luke 16:24.

CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS

CONFIRM THE DEFINITION OF BAPTIDZO

1. Josephus, born A.D. 37, *Jewish Antiquities*, book xv, ch. 3, 3. Describing the murder of the boy Aristobulus, who (by Herod's command) was drowned by his companions in a swimming-bath, says:
"Continually pressing down and immersing (Baptizing) him while swimming, as if in sport, they did not desist till they had entirely suffocated him."
2. Diodorus wrote his history about 60-30 B.C. Historical Library, book xvi, ch. 80. In his account of Timoleon's defeat of the Carthaginian army on the bank of the river Crimissus, in Sicily, many of the fugitives perishing in the stream, swollen by a violent storm, he says:
"The river, rushing down with the current, increased in violence, submerged (baptized) many, and destroyed them attempting to swim through with their armor."

REFORMERS CONFIRM IMMERSION

1. John Wesley: "Buried with him—alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion." Notes on Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12.
2. Martin Luther: "Baptism is a sign of both death and resurrection. Being moved by this reason, I would have those who are to be baptized to be altogether dipped into the water, as the word doth express and the mystery doth signify."

WHY IS "BAPTIDZO" NEVER TRANSLATED SPRINKLE?

The definition for sprinkling is to scatter in drops and for pouring is to turn out into a stream. Using Jesus' statement in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," let's substitute these other terms. "He that believeth and is poured shall be saved" This creates more questions than it answers. What is he to be poured from? And what is he to be poured into? Using the definition for sprinkling creates an unsightly mess as well. "He that believeth and is scattered in drops shall be saved." Need more be said as to why these terms are never found where the Greek word *baptizo* is found?

MODERN DAY DICTIONARIES

Some might say, "My Webster's Dictionary says immerse, sprinkle or pour." One must keep in mind that dictionaries reflect contemporary usage in the society of which they are a part. For example, the word *church* is defined as a building where religious people assemble. Jesus did not purchase buildings at Calvary—he purchased Christians (Acts 20:28). Therefore, one should not use an English dictionary to obtain Bible definitions.

HISTORY OF SPRINKLING

The first departure from the apostolic practice of immersion occurred in 251 A.D. or thereabouts. Novation, who, in apprehension of death, according to Eusebius, had water poured over his body in bed. The Council of Neo-Caesarea (314-325), some 80 years later, declared the priesthood was officially prohibited a person who had received "clinical baptism."

By the year 700 A.D. infants were being sprinkled with water. A doctrine originating with man called "original sin" had now been introduced by false teachers. This doctrine consists mainly of the teaching that man is inherently evil receiving through generations the corruption first found in Adam, the first man. The Bible teaches that sin cannot be inherited, (Ezekiel 18:20; 28:15). James instructs that lust precedes the act of sin. No infants have evil thoughts, (See James 1:14, 15). Most infants, at this time in history, were immersed, as a result of the "original sin" doctrine.

The Council of Ravenna, 1311 A.D. gave the first official decree, declaring that the Papacy had sanctioned affusion (pouring) as the official mode of baptizing for the Catholic Church.

MAY SPRINKLING BE SUBSTITUTED FOR IMMERSION?

The first recorded substitution in worship occurred in the case of Cain, (Genesis 4). Later, Nadab and Abihu tried substituting the source for the coals to burn incense and the Lord shot out fire from heaven, destroying both, (Leviticus 10:1, 2).

In Acts 19:1-5, we see that those baptized by John's baptism had to be reimmersed because believers were to now express their faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. This also clarifies why the thief on the cross would not have been immersed to be forgiven. How could he express his faith in the death, burial, and resurrection if Jesus had not yet died, been buried or

resurrected?

YOU CAN KNOW FOR CERTAIN ..

... if you are willing to submit yourself to God's will in immersion. After you have obeyed the gospel, you need to work and worship with those of like faith. Some have stated "I want to be immersed as the Bible teaches, but I want to worship where I now attend." Since immersion for the remission of sins is not taught in almost all denominations, one who has obeyed the gospel stands alone as the only born again person attending there. Plus this fact, all his brothers and sisters are in the Lord's church where all members are immersed for remission of sins.

FINDING BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO HAVE BEEN IMMERSSED

If you would like to locate a group of Christians who use their Bible as their only source of authority, write to me or locate the church of Christ in your area. When one responds at the invitation in the Lord's church, they are immediately immersed into Christ. Most responding to the invitation are baptized immediately upon making the decision, whether the church is assembled or not (Acts 16:25-33; 22:16).

God is expressing the same plea today as is expressed in Acts 22:16: "And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name."

Please come to Jesus right now!

The Ear That Blesses

JERRIE BARBER

"When the ear heard me, then it blessed me" (Job 29:11).

I have heard that one of the greatest fears of men is the fear of speaking to a group of people. That may be true. Surveys support it.

However, it is my unscholarly observation that there are thousands more excellent speakers than there are outstanding listeners. Both talking and listening are essential for a complete communication cycle. Both are scriptural when done in a good manner, at the right time, and for the right purpose.

LISTENING SUGGESTIONS

1. People need someone to listen. It is amazing and encouraging in the last few years, since I have been working on listening as well as talking, how more than one person has said, "The answer to the problem is clear now that I have talked about it. No one had let me explain the whole thing before. Thank you for listening."

2. People will check to see if I am a compassionate listener. Many have told me what horrible problems a friend was having and asked for my suggestions for that friend. When I have been kind in dealing with that "friend," they have later told me that the "friend" was themselves, and then they were ready to really talk.

3. People will determine if I am sensitive. Sensitivity hears more than just words that are spoken. "My mother is a widow now" also says, "My father has died." My ignoring or responding to that will communicate whether I have the time, concern, or inclination to "weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15).

4. Listening is hard work. My experience has been that it takes preparation, dedication, and concentration to be effective in listening.

5. Listening is a rewarding service. When I really listen to a person with a hurt, with a tough decision, with a complicated problem, or with a joy to celebrate, I am putting into practice what I preach about one soul being worth more than all the world. In fact, this person is worth an hour of my focused attention! Also, I have found the same blessing returned to me: Listen, and you will be listened to: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will blessings be put into your life. For with the same measure that you value other people, that value will be measured back to you.

Let's work on having a blessed ear as Job described, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me."

His thoughts were slow,

His words were few, and never formed to glisten

But he was a joy to all his friends—

You should have heard him listen.

Who Intercedes And Mediates For Us?

T. PIERCE BROWN

The question is sometimes asked, "Since 1 Timothy 2:5 says that there is one mediator between God and man—Christ Jesus who intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:24), how is it that Romans 8:26 indicates that the Holy Spirit also intercedes for us?" The basic question is, "If there is one, and only one mediator, how can there be two?" Possibly a related problem would be, "If we can discover that there is more than one mediator, maybe some man, such as a preacher, priest, or pope might also be one."

One key to the problem is the failure to distinguish between things that differ. "Intercession" is from the Greek word "enteuxis" and means "a petition with respect to." The verb "entugchano," translated "deal with" once and "make intercession" four times means "make petition or intercession either for or against a person" (See Acts 25:24, where the Jews made intercession against Paul). The Spirit makes intercession (Romans 8:26), Christ makes intercession (Romans 8:24, Hebrews 7:25), and we are to make intercession for each other (1 Timothy 2:1; 4:5). God in no way, at no time, limited the number of persons who are allowed to intercede for another.

However, the word "mediator" is from the Greek word "mesites," and literally means "a go-between"—one who mediates between two parties to produce a reconciliation of differences. Christ is a mediator in a way that no one else is or can be. The peculiar nature of man's relationship with God demanded a special mediator. Man was estranged from God by sin, and there needed to be a price paid, an offer made and accepted before man could be reconciled to God. Although Moses could be a mediator of the law (Galatians 3:19), he could not accomplish what Christ needed to and did accomplish as a mediator.

In a dispute between labor and management, a federal mediator may be able to offer certain things to management on behalf of labour, and to offer certain other things to labour on behalf of management. He may or may not intercede, but if he

does, it is a different function than that of mediation.

As a Mediator of the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15), Christ entered once (for all) into the Holy place to make possible this reconciliation of man to God (Hebrews 9:24-28), but one can intercede to God on behalf of man without doing that.

Although this is a slightly different aspect of the same subject, it is my considered judgment that the intercession of the Holy Spirit spoken of in Romans 8:26 is done through the prayers of the individual who does not know what to pray for as he ought, so he makes inarticulate groans in the spirit, and the Spirit by which he lives knows and "interprets" these groanings to God who searches the hearts. One would need to have an unusual concept of the Holy Spirit to conclude that the Holy Spirit Himself had to express his mind by inarticulate groanings.

But this intercession of the Spirit, however it may be done, is not the same as the mediatorial office or function of Jesus as spoken of in 1 Timothy 2:5.

I realize that a far more scholarly and definitive article could be written about this profound subject, answering far more questions, and dealing with it in more depth, but perhaps this is at least enough to help make us more aware of the differences between intercession and mediation, and that the particular kind of mediation Christ does for us is unique.

Reading For His Own Benefit

HARDEMAN NICHOLS

The drawn expressions of shock were still upon the faces of the neighbors and friends who were gathering to offer sympathy to his widow. Like most of us, these knew of the possibility of death, but it was not expected here yet. His wife met the three of us as we entered the room.

Her husband had died suddenly at the evening service soon after worship began. One minute he was singing praise and the next he was slumping forward as his soul left the body. He had prepared, but he wasn't ready. That is, he had made preparation

for changing worlds some day by obeying the gospel and growing for many years into a mature soul, but he wasn't expecting that this would be the day of death. We offered our condolences as his wife recounted the already precious memories of the hours spent with him that day.

I was glancing around the room, noticing the usual touches of comfortable housekeeping. Beside what apparently was his favorite chair were books and commentaries, arranged at hand on a table as if they had been left in the midst of use to go to the evening services of the meeting. On that table was a well-worn Bible with a sheet of paper marking a place in it. She saw my eyes lingering on this place of study and she explained that while she had ironed during the afternoon, he had sat there and studied. One of them asked, "Oh, was he preparing to teach a class?" "No," she replied; "he was just reading the Bible for his own benefit."

Now there is the key to conversion and growth. The rich benefits of the Bible are available to those who read it with proper motives. It is commendable to study; to read the Bible for the purpose of sharing its truths with others; but this is good only if we are constantly reading the Scriptures for our own benefit.

In the hurried paces of each day stop running. Read God's Word and pray.

Some Plain Facts

DAVID PHARR

This permissive age has produced a generation which neither knows nor cares about Bible principles of morality. Chastity, the sanctity of marriage, and purity of heart almost seem to be relics of another age. Our young people are growing up under constant suggestions from the media and many of their friends that in moral matters "each can do his own thing." Many people of more mature years are also affected. Here are some plain facts for young and old.

Fornication is Sin. This means every kind of illicit sexual activity. The Bible is plain. Those who practice fornication cannot go to Heaven (Galatians 5:19-21).

Homosexual activities are contrary to nature and God (Romans 1:27). What is called "gay" will result in the damnation of Hell.

Pornography is a medium for lust and lasciviousness. This applies to suggestiveness, lewdness, nudity, etc., whether in printing, movies, or television. Jesus said, *"But I say unto you. That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart"* (Matthew 5:28).

Things done in secret are never hidden. Actions too shameful to describe are sometimes done in secret (Ephesians 5:12). Modern situations which provide privacy cause many to feel their sins are secret. God sees it all (Proverbs 15:3). Every secret thing will be brought into judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

Love is not an excuse for Sin. A typical defense for illicit sex is, "We love each other." At best this is self-deception. Love involves honor. In the highest sense of love, one will not cause the one he/she loves to do that which will put him/her in danger of the fires of Hell. One should be honest enough to call things by their right names. It's not love, it's lust (Romans 13:14)!

Married love is God's plan for sexual fulfillment (Hebrews 13:4). The duties and privileges of the marriage relationship are clear (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). Husbands and wives are required by law (God's law) to love each other (Ephesians 5:25, 28; Colossians 3:18, 19). Couples who "fall out of love" are not following God's plan.

Marriage is for life. No teaching of Christ is more plain than this (Matthew 19:3-9). Regardless of what counselors, lawyers, or judges might say, one who causes the breakup of marriage for any cause except fornication sins against God. If he/she marries another (except when the mate who was put away was guilty of fornication), it is adultery.

There are situations (caused by sinful attitudes, selfishness, hatefulness, etc.) when a couple cannot stay together, but they are still married to each other. Even if under civil law they are divorced, they are not free to marry others. The same restrictions of fidelity apply as if they were still together. They have no more right to "date" or to consider another marriage than they would if they were happily living together (see 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11).

There is never a marriage breakup without sin being involved. Both may not be guilty, but sin is an essential ingredient to divorce. It is tragic how casually some men and women hurt their mates, ruin their homes, and break the hearts of their children. It is more tragic when we consider the awful and eternal consequences of such callous disregard of the will of God (Hebrews 10:30, 31).

Marriages which are guided by the principles of Christ are happy marriages. Because human beings are involved, there are often some stresses and strains, but principles as in Ephesians 4:32 and 5:22, 23, 1 Peter 3:1-8, Acts 20:35, and Matthew 6:33 and 7:12 will show the way to overcome problems and to build happiness.

The Origin And Nature of the Soul

WAYNE JACKSON

Does man have a soul? Atheistic materialism asserts that he does not. Religious materialists contend that man is a soul, but they argue that man "does not possess a soul separate and distinct from the body." Others admit that man has a soul, but they deny its eternal nature. They believe that the souls of the wicked will be annihilated. None of these ideas is correct.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL

The word "soul" is employed in various ways in the Scriptures. It may denote the whole person (1 Peter 3:20), or merely the life principle that animates a biological body (Genesis 1:30). On the other hand, it may be used of an intelligent, conscious entity that dwells within the human person. The Bible clearly teaches that the human being has within him/her an entity that is created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26-27). That entity within the person may be called "soul" (Matthew 10:28), or "spirit" (James 2:26). This component of man is both intellectual (1 Cor. 2:11), and emotional (Dan. 7:15).

THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL

What is the explanation for the origin of the human soul? Different answers to this question have been suggested.

First, some of the ancient Jewish rabbis apparently believed in the pre-existence of the soul. Some other religionists allege that souls pre-exist prior to the formation of the body (Pearl of Great Price, Moses 3:5), so that when a body is conceived God dispatches a soul for that body.

The disciples once asked Christ a question regarding a man who had been born blind. "Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (John 9:2). Though Calvin asserted that this suggested the doctrine of soul transmigration, such a view is not necessary. Some Jewish rabbis did argue, however, that infants could sin in the womb; they alleged that Esau attempted to kill Jacob before birth. There is, of course, no justification for such views and there is no biblical support for the theory that souls exist prior to the formation of the body.

Second, some suggest that the soul, like the body, is inherited from one's parents. It is thus alleged that the contamination of Adam's original sin, via the inheritance of the soul, has been transmitted to all men. Again, the Bible simply does not contain the evidence proving this notion. Moreover, this theory suggests some great difficulties. For instance, did Jesus inherit a tainted soul from Mary? And, if soul-sin is inherited, how could one be held personally accountable for his conduct?

The Bible actually teaches that the soul is formed by God and placed within the body; and the most reasonable inference is that this occurs at the time the body is conceived. Consider the following evidence. Jehovah is identified as "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Numbers 16:22). Solomon declared that it is God who gives the human spirit (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The prophet Zechariah affirmed that Jehovah "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zechariah 12:1). Finally, an inspired writer argues that God is "the Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:7). Clearly, the soul is from God, not from one's parents.

James affirms that the body apart from the spirit is dead (James 2:26). That would suggest that the body, united with the spirit, is alive. Since the body—tiny though it may be—is alive from the moment of conception, it would appear to follow that the

human spirit is fused with the body at the time of conception, and leaves the body at death.

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

Does man possess an enduring soul, or an incorruptible spirit, that will exist forever? Yes. The soul survives the death of the body, both for the righteous and the wicked (Revelation 6:9; Matthew 10:28).

The disobedient are to be subjected to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46), which will consist of suffering (2 Thessalonians 1:9). There is, however, no punishment, or suffering, apart from consciousness. And yet, consciousness (knowledge, awareness) is a characteristic of the spirit (1 Corinthians 2:11). One must necessarily infer, therefore, that the spirit (or soul) of man will exist in an eternal conscious state.

The soul is our most valuable possession; it is worth more than the whole world (Matthew 16:26). Let us, therefore, adorn the spirit with incorruptible apparel (1 Peter 3:4), befitting its nature.

Distinctions Are Essential

HOLLIS MILLER

A man once told me that his mother had become a religious fanatic. Before questioning the man's judgment, it might be advisable to study the Pharisees of the New Testament. So concerned were they with keeping every tedious detail of their assembled traditions that they were rendered both blind and deaf to the teaching of Jesus. It is possible to become a religious fanatic, if by the term one means meticulous attention to endless matters that are neither taught nor sanctioned by the Scriptures.

But relatively few individuals in the modern world become religious fanatics. The opposite is more often the rule. I recently read a cartoon in which one individual was asking another: "Do you think it necessary for a Christian to regularly attend worship?" The individual being asked replied, "I never knew a Christian who did not want to." That cartoon is an excellent catapult for projecting us into many questions. For example: "Is it necessary for a Christian to feed one who is hungry; love and care for his family;

or be merciful and forgiving?" It is difficult to find a stopping place for such questions, isn't it?

The Christian spirit is nowhere represented in the Bible as one which seeks to avoid pleasing and serving the Lord. Rather, it is always pictured as a spirit of willing and obedient surrender. Paul put it this way: *"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Philippians 3:8).

With regard to serving the Lord, one who finds himself asking such questions as "Must I?" or "Do I have to?" needs to review the commitment of his heart.

Strong Character

JOHNNY RAMSEY

So many people today fail to emphasize the power and importance of genuine character. It is unpopular, even politically incorrect, to have strong convictions and dedicated commitment. However, the weak, insipid and spineless folk of this world never contribute any worthwhile endeavor to our society. Only those with strong character and strong convictions make a difference. To fail to press on when adversity looms before us is the mark of a coward rather than a hero. A great passage of Scripture reminds us of the value of perseverance: *"Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses"* (1 Tim. 6:12).

How desperately do we need today the valiant dedication of men like Joshua, Samuel and Jeremiah to stem the shallowness of elders and preachers in the Lord's church who have put down the sword long ago and yielded to popular appeal! As someone has said, "Faith does not demand that we win; it does demand that we keep trying." The importance of discipline in our daily conduct is a Bible principle most overlook. The pertinent message of Job 5:17 rings out loud and clear: *"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."*

When we recall the boldness of Nathan rebuking David, King of Israel (2 Samuel 12), or the rich courage of Isaiah in confronting another king, Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1), then we are encouraged to strengthen our resolve to stand up for Jesus daily. A brilliant reminder of proper mind-set follows: "Nothing splendid has ever been achieved, except by those who dared to believe that something inside them was superior to outward circumstance." The prophet Micaiah was determined to tell earthly kings of impending doom that would soon follow their flagrant disobedience, in spite of the dungeon that would follow his courageous utterance. A chapter which all gospel preachers should meditate upon often is 1 Kings 22. Micaiah prophesied the truth, even at great cost to himself. But he spoke. "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities which are brilliantly disguised as impossible situations."

Strong character is forged upon the anvil of God's sacred word (Isa. 55:11). We cannot have the loyalty to truth we need while we remain ignorant of the Scriptures. It is even possible to know academically the Bible message and still be a coward. However, to study with resolution and devotion is combination that worries Satan. Psalm 27:4 is a masterpiece: *"One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in his temple."*

When we are willing to die for the cause of Jesus Christ, like Stephen (Acts 7) or Paul (Acts 21:13), we will possess strength of character, also! E.E. Hewitt wrote a great song to challenge us:

*In the strength of the Lord
Let me labour and pray,
Let me watch as a winner of souls,
That bright stars may be mine
In the glorious day,
When His praise like the sea billows roll.
Soldiers of Christ, press on to victory!*

