

Monthly

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THE BIBLE TEACHER



LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of His one church everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must be told to believe in Christ, to repent of wrong, to confess Christ the Son of God, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church. (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4; 5:22).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, after His name alone, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

***The apostles were given the authority to
bind and to loose***

When Christ had promised to build His church, additionally, He had promised the apostle Peter, "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." (Matthew 16:19). Keys are symbol of authority. In other words, Christ was telling Peter on that occasion that when His kingdom or the church would be established Peter would be the one given the authority to tell people what they must do to enter His kingdom. Whatever terms or conditions he would establish on that day for the entrance into God's kingdom or church on earth that will be established or recognized in heaven. But whatever he would loose, that is, would not tell people to do, will be loosed in heaven, that is, such will not be recognized in heaven too. Keeping this in view, when we turn to Acts chapter two where we read the story of the establishment of the church, we read that it was Peter who stood up with the eleven apostles and preached to the large audience the gospel of Christ for the very first time on earth. (Acts 2:14). Again, when those who had the opportunity to hear the gospel the very first time, believing, when they had turned to the apostles to ask, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). The record says, "Then Peter said to them, Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name

of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). So what did Peter bind must one do to be saved from sin or to have the forgiveness of sins? The apostle with the keys of the kingdom of heaven bound that those who believe after hearing the gospel of Christ, must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, or to be saved. What did he loose? Whatever he did not bind one must do to be saved he loosed, such as, circumcision, salvation by faith alone, or saying a sinners' prayer to be saved.

Not only the apostle Peter alone was authorised to bind and loose on earth things concerning the spiritual matters, but later, the same authority was given to all other apostles also by Christ, as He told them, "Assuredly; I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18). This simply means that Christ, who had all the authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), had later delegated that authority to His apostles, to whom He had also promised that they would receive the Holy Spirit, the power from on high, after His departure from the earth. He, the Holy Spirit, according to Christ, when He would come to them, He would guide them into all truth, and would bring to their remembrance all things that Christ had taught them while He was on earth with them. (Luke 24:46-49; John 14:25,26; 16:12,13).

After the apostles, according to the promise that was made to them, had received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5-8; Acts 2:1-4), and as they began to lead and guide the church into all God's truth, the apostle John wrote to Christians: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirit, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Continuing he said, "We (the apostles, SD), are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:1&6).

As Christians, therefore, we accept and follow only those things which have been taught by Christ Himself and which He taught through or by the apostles. To be saved from sin we must give the same answer to people, who are seeking salvation in Christ, what the apostle Peter had told his listeners, and as Christ had also taught earlier. (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Too, we must worship in spirit and truth according to what is taught in the New Testament, and not according to the commandments of men.

(John 4:24; Matt. 15:8,9). The first day of the week, Sunday, the day on which Christ was resurrected from the dead, was the only day Christians in the first century celebrated by coming together to partake in the Lord's Supper to remember the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Acts 20: 7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and we do the same today, every week. All other days which people celebrated under the Old Testament law, such as Sabbath and Pentecost, etc. have been loosed by the apostles. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote the Christians of his day, who had come to Christ from non-Jewish or Gentile background, "But then indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have laboured for you in vain." (Galatians 4:8-11). Nowhere in the New Testament of the Bible do we read that the apostles of Christ ever taught or bound the observance of a forty days lent period, or of Good Friday, or Easter or Christmas, or any other such observance. These and many other such practices are according to the teachings and commandments of men, and had never been taught by the apostles of Christ to whom He had given the authority to bind and to loose.

Obedience To The Gospel

J.C. CHOATE

Can one obey the gospel? There are those who say that this is impossible. But the Bible teaches the contrary. There are the facts of the gospel, which have already been observed, and we must believe them. Then there are commands of the gospel, which will be considered in following lessons, and we must obey them.

To begin with, let us re-emphasize the facts of the gospel. Paul listed them in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as being the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But what does this have to do with obedience? A great deal, as we are going to see. Listen to the Apostle as he writes to the Christians in Rome: "*But God be*

thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17,18). Please notice that they were the servants of sin and then they became the servants of righteousness. What brought about the change? Simply this: They "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered" to them. In other words, they obeyed the gospel of Christ. But how could they obey facts? They couldn't and didn't. The doctrine here refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But once again: They had obeyed a form of that doctrine. In so doing they had died to their sins, had been buried with their Lord in the waters of baptism, and had been resurrected from the watery grave. This is all brought out in the first part of Romans 6. Let us read: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together, in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin" (Romans 6:1-6). So that is the form of doctrine that they had obeyed as pointed out by Paul later in Romans 6:17,18. Not only so, but every time someone obeys the gospel of Christ he obeys this form of doctrine, or pictures the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in his actions.

As we continue, we want to see what the commands of the gospel are and how they relate to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord Himself commanded the apostles, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). Matthew's version is recorded thus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even

to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19,20). Now you will observe here that the Lord is giving the command that the gospel should be preached. Not only so, but He carries through to show that certain commands must be obeyed for the individual to be saved.

In carrying out the Lord's instructions the apostles are found preaching the gospel in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2). They produce proofs and evidences to prove that Jesus was truly the Son of God. After the people were convinced of this, the record says they asked this question: *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37). Then to show that there was something for them to do, Peter replied, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). Also, when the Lord appeared to Saul in Acts 9 he wanted to know what he should do to be saved. The Lord told him to go into the city and it would be told him. Later Ananias came and did just that (Acts 22:16).

In Acts 8 we have Philip preaching Christ to the eunuch and the record says that the eunuch wanted to be baptized. But listen to the conversation that followed: *"Then, Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing"* (Acts 8:37-39).

Now what are the commands of the gospel? First, it is necessary for one to hear the gospel preached. Second, one must believe in God, and Christ, as the Son of God. Third, he must repent of all of his sins. Fourth, he must confess with his mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And fifth, he must be baptized, buried in water, for the remission of sins.

Continuing with these thoughts, in obeying the commands of the gospel, one dies to his sins. That is, he has heard the gospel and has come to believe the Lord to the extent that he is willing to repent of all of his sins or to turn away from them. Thus, this represents death to sin. Then following death there is a burial. This is a burial in water. We have already observed Philip and the eunuch going down into the water that the burial might be

performed. Also Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:4 tell us that baptism is a burial in water. After the burial comes the resurrection. Acts 8 says that Philip and the eunuch came up out of the water. Romans 6 also talks about a burial and a resurrection and then a planting and being raised to walk in newness of life. Thus, in one's obedience to these simple commands, we have the individual symbolizing the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Not only so, but every individual who obeys Christ so pictures that death, burial, and resurrection.

In John 3:3-5 Christ speaks of being born of water and of the Spirit. This is just another way of saying the same thing, for when one is buried in water, then there is the coming forth or a birth from water, which is a resurrection from the watery grave. As such, one goes forth to walk in newness of life, since he is now a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Commands are to be obeyed, and those who obey the commands of the Lord are rewarded accordingly. But please be reminded of the fact that not one of the commands of the gospel can be by-passed as being unnecessary or unimportant. Only after compliance with each command does the Lord save a person, add him to the church, give him all spiritual blessings, with the hope of eternal life.

Although the gospel is for all, and must be obeyed by all accountable beings for salvation to be had, yet Paul laments, "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?'*" (Romans 10:16). This within itself would imply again that one must obey it to be saved. But what about those who do not? He says, in this case, "*And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). So according to this, ignorance of God on the one hand and failure to obey the gospel on the other, will bring the same results; the vengeance of the Lord. Christ said that those who obey the gospel will be saved, but those who believe not will be condemned (Mark 16:16). All of this is to say that there will be no escape for those who neglect their salvation (Hebrews 2:2,3).

Moment of Lust

FRANK CHESSER

He was alone and idle, fertile soil for sin. Upon viewing the unclad form of Bathsheba, he could not help the stirrings within, a manifestation of desire divinely implanted. However, he looked too long and lost. His lust "conceived" and gave birth to sin (James 1:15). Adultery was the fruition of David's unrestrained desire, followed by deception and murder (2 Samuel 12).

Sometime later, Amnon, David's firstborn son, raped Tamar, his half-sister. David's own sin rendered him impotent in dealing with the sin of his son. For two years, Absalom plotted revenge for his sister's shame. His moment came at a sheep-shearing festival, and he stained his servant's sword with the blood of his half-brother.

Five long years passed before Joab effected reconciliation between David and Absalom. Those years enabled the seed of bitterness to sprout and grow within the heart of David's son. Thus, Absalom schemed to extort the kingdom from his own father. By means of subtlety and flattery, he *"stole the hearts of the men of Israel"* (2 Samuel 15:6).

When David learned of Absalom's rebellion, he fled Jerusalem with his family and loyal followers. Barefooted, head covered, bathing the earth in tears, he ascended the Mount of Olives, his heart pierced with arrows of grief (2 Samuel 15:30). Ahithophel, David's counselor, turned traitor and urged immediate pursuit of David and his followers. Inconceivably, Ahithophel's call for David's death *"pleased Absalom well"* (2 Samuel 15:4). However, the advice of Hushai, David's friend, counteracted that of David's former counselor, as the providence of God worked to assure Absalom's defeat.

The battle lines were drawn. It was father against son. The child he once held in his arms now coveted his life. A sword had supplanted a warm embrace. The battle was joined and Absalom died. As David ascended the steps to his chamber he cried, *"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son"* (2 Samuel 18:33). Oh, the sin that was spawned in a moment of lust.

Is There Present-Day Revelation From God

RANDY KEA

Much of the confusion in the religious world today has resulted from the fact that many (if not most) religious groups and their leaders claim direct present-day revelation from God. In contradiction and contrast to this claim, the New Testament of Christ claims to be God's full, complete, authoritative, and final revelation from God.

God gave His word to Christ: *"For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak"* (John 12:49).

Christ gave this Word to the apostles: *"I have given them thy word"* (John 17:8, 14, 17,20,21).

The apostles could, through their hands, impart miraculous powers and spiritual gifts, one of which was the gift of prophecy. This gift enabled the one possessing it to speak and write by inspiration of God (Acts 8:14-18; Romans 1:11; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

The New Testament, the Gospel of Christ, was revealed through the apostles and prophets.

Are You A Berean

ROD KYLE

The Bereans were noble truth seekers. Acts 17:11 records... *"They received the Word with eagerness, examining the Scripture daily, to see whether these things were so."* The apostle Paul commanded the Thessalonians to *"prove all things"* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Can you prove what you believe by God's Word, the Bible? To help you, I have suggested the following areas of investigation.

Your church's creed. Is it a document authored by an uninspired man or is it the Bible, written by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 15:9; 2 Peter 1:21)? In other words, **is Christ your creed**

(1 Corinthians 3:1, Acts 4:12)?

Your rule of faith. Is it your church's creedal statements, your opinions, some sort of consensus arrangement within your group, or **the Word of Christ** — Romans 10:17? Called the law of liberty in James 1:25, the Bible alone is the complete and sufficient guide (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:5-17) which we cannot add to or take from (Revelation 22:18,19).

Your church government. Does it comply with the New Testament pattern for the church, or exhibit the innovations and ecclesiastical structures of prominent religious groups? **Only Christ is the head of His church** (Colossians 1:18). Each autonomous congregation under Him is to be governed by bishops (Plural) selected from amongst the members of that congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The deacons, evangelists, and members within the local church all serve under their oversight (Hebrews 13:17). Any religious organization that departs from this pattern has departed from the Word of God (1 Corinthians 4:6,17).

Your law of pardon. Souls were saved from sin in New Testament times through **God's law of pardon**. It was the same for all (Romans 2:11). All had to **believe in Jesus** as their Savior (John 8:24), **repent of sins** (Acts 3:19), **confess faith in Jesus** (Acts 8:37), and be **immersed in water for the removal of their sins** (Acts 2:38). Then, and only then, did **Jesus add them to His church** (Acts 2:41,47). How does this compare with what you are accustomed to seeing and hearing? Are you willing to be a Berean and search God's Word for yourself?

Keeping The Promise

PATRICK BOYNES

You know that she had to be special for him to have spent so much money on her. When the most he'd ever bought for anyone before was a tee shirt from Blackpool, a seven diamond ring was really going to the other extreme. And it wasn't only the money. It was the selfless way he had asked her to be his bride — he'd put his money where his mouth was.

The ring was his word. It was the best way he knew how to say that his intentions were both loving and honourable. He had

made a promise he planned to keep. If he had given the ring, then he would later give himself. It was his guarantee.

When John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, he told of One greater who would baptize the people with the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus departed this earth He told His followers that He would send the gift — His Father had promised, the one they had heard Him speak about. When Peter stood up on that memorable day of Pentecost, he told the people how that the resurrected Jesus had poured out the promised Holy Spirit which He had received from the Father, and that the promise was for them, their children, and for all whom the Lord would call. And when Paul writes to the Ephesians he speaks of being marked in Christ *"with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."*

The Scriptures repeatedly insist that God is a keeper of promises. Men of faith, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Elijah, Daniel and many more would readily testify to God's faithfulness to His word. When God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him, He is fulfilling a promise — He is keeping His word.

But more than that, when God gives His Holy Spirit, He is providing a guarantee to fulfill all the other promises He has made. The Holy Spirit *"is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance"* (Ephesians 1:14). He is *"in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come"* (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). Where each of these verses use the word "deposit", Paul uses the Greek word "arrabon" — a word used in the ancient business world for a pledge or down payment assuring the subsequent payment of the full amount. And, significantly, it is a word which the modern Greeks use for an engagement ring.

If we have the Spirit of God living within us, we have assurance of *"the promised eternal inheritance"* (Hebrews 9:15), *"an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade"* (1 Peter 1:3,4). It is not a matter of "I'll be going to heaven if I've been good enough" or "if I've attended church meetings." It is rather a matter of I'll be going to heaven if I have the Spirit of Christ within me. If God has given us His Spirit, He will also give us our inheritance.

And when God comes to invade our lives with His presence, He doesn't come with a suitcase. He comes with a removal van and plans to stay. And He's not like a tenant who is willing to put up with that ghastly wallpaper until it is time to move on to the next place — God has plans to redecorate and remodel us to His

liking and by His Spirit. The abiding presence of God within the life of every true believer is a constant assurance that our hope is real and everlasting. If He has given us His ring, then He will give us His all.

Be Still, and Know That I Am God

DANNY BOGGS

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride... Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; he burns the chariots with fire. 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11).

During the reign of Jehoshaphat, Judah feared an impending attack by the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites. Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah gathered themselves together to bring their anxiety before the Lord. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon one Jahaziel, and the Lord said, *"Do not fear or be dismayed because of the great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's"* (2 Chronicles 20:15). They were told that God would be with them in the battle and that they could stand and see the Lord's salvation in their behalf. Hearing God's reassuring message, the sons of Kohath and Korah broke into joyful song, apparently singing this psalm of trust and praise.

The army rose the next day to go to battle, led by a group of singing Levites. Upon reaching the enemy armies, God's people found that the Lord had caused ambushes to be set for their enemies, who turned and killed each other! (This account appears in 2 Chronicles 20.)

What an awesome God our Lord is! He is in control everywhere, and yet He is here for each of us. We would live in peace and contentment with a song in our hearts, if only we would

realize that we are not alone; the battle is the Lord's. He is our refuge and strength, our very present help in times of trouble. Whatever may befall us in this life, He desires to assist those who trust Him (1 Peter 5:6,7). When we bring our burdens to Him, we are promised, *"the peace of God which passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7). Be still, and know that He is God!

The Importance of the Church That Jesus Built

PERRY COTHAM

Caesarea Philippi was a city literally founded upon a rock. It was in that vicinity that Jesus asked His disciples, *"Who do men say that the Son of man is?"* (Matthew 16:13). Various answers were given. Some were saying that He was John the Baptist, risen from the dead; others thought of Him as Elijah; and still others said He was Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Then the Lord put the question directly to the disciples: *"But who say ye that I am?"* (Matthew 16:15). Then Peter made a most noble confession of his faith: *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"*. Many things led Peter to this conclusion. He had seen the miracles of our Lord, thrilled to His matchless discourses, and beheld His perfect life. Peter must have spoken the sentiments of all the other apostles, for none contradicted him.

Following Peter's confession of faith in Him as God's Son, Jesus said: *"Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"* (Matthew 16:17-19 ASV).

This is a most significant passage of Scripture; note some clearly suggested truths about it.

The Church Was Founded by Christ

The first truth studied is that the church of the New Testament

was built by Jesus Christ Himself. To the apostles, Christ promised, "I will build My church." The church founded by Christ is a divine organism and is in faith, doctrine, organization, worship, unity, and terms of membership just what the Lord would have it to be. In this respect, the church is perfect and cannot be improved. Thus, in establishing His church, the original and true church, He showed that no one ever had divine authority to originate a church.

When Christ spoke of building the church, He used a possessive term, "My church". The church is, therefore, Christ's church, or the church of Christ, because He built it. Again, the church belongs to Christ because He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27). When Paul spoke of various congregations of the Lord's church, he said, "*The churches of Christ...*" (Romans 16:16).

Grammatically, the expression "the church of Christ" is not a title; it is simply a descriptive term indicating the fact that the church is the possession of Christ — that is, a prepositional phrase denoting ownership of the church. It is the same, therefore, as saying Christ's church.

The Church Is the Saved

When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," just what did He have in mind to establish? The Bible, in answering this question, uses several designations in speaking of the institution or organism known as the Lord's church.

1. If the church is viewed from the standpoint of its relationship to the world, it is called the "church", this means the "called out", or those who are distinct from the world, having been called by the Gospel (John 15:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14).
2. If the church is viewed from the standpoint of its government, it is properly called the "kingdom", with Christ the absolute king and all departments of government (legislative, judicial, and executive) vested in Him (Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 15:24,25). "Church" and "kingdom" are used by Christ in Matthew 16:18,19 in reference to the same institution (cf. Luke 22:29,30; 1 Corinthians 11:20; Hebrews 12:23,28). To be in the church of Christ is to be in the kingdom of Christ.

3. If the church is spoken of from the standpoint of its organization, it is called the "body", with Christ as the head and all Christians members of this one body (Romans 12:4,5).
4. If this institution is viewed from the standpoint of a family, it is called the "house of God", or the family of the Lord, with all of God's children being members of this family, the church (1 Timothy 3:15; Romans 8:14-17).
5. If the church is described from the standpoint of its worship, it is properly called the "temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17, 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5). The church is not a material building, or the meeting house (Acts 7:48; 17:24). It is a spiritual temple, for God dwells in this building and is worshiped there. In the New Testament the word "church" never refers to a material building.
6. If the organism is viewed in reference to its relationship to Christ, it is the bride of Christ, and individual members wear His name (Ephesians 5:23-32; Acts 11:26,26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

One can understand why the same institution is referred to by several designations, for a man can be a brother, a husband, a lawyer, a citizen, a Christian, and a father. He is one man, yet considered from six different relationships.

The First Lie; But Not the Last!

A. L. FRANKS

True "Christianity" is the world's greatest blessing. It centers around Jesus, the Christ — the Son of God. It is empowered by faith in the actual, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The apostle Paul stated that the resurrection of our Lord "*declared*" Him to be "*the Son of God with power*" (Romans 1:4). If Jesus was not raised; if He was not made "*alive forever more*" (Revelation 1:18), then what is called "Christianity" falls flat on its face and is of no lasting or eternal value.

An inspired apostle wrote about several sad realities... "*If Christ be not risen.*" Among them, he included: (a) "*preaching is vain*"

(b) *"faith is vain"* (c) Gospel preachers are *"false witnesses"* (d) believers are *"yet in their sins"*, and those who have (e) *"fallen asleep in Jesus"* are *"perished"* (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

The actuality of the resurrection of Jesus is plainly and repeatedly taught in the Holy Scriptures. The four Gospel writers of the New Testament all relate vivid details about the literal resurrection of the *"One called Jesus"*. According to Matthew, an angel spoke to certain women saying, *"Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus; which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he had said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay"* (Matthew 28:5,6).

In Mark's record, he wrote about a *"young man clothed in a long white garment"* who announced to the women that came early on the first day of the week to Jesus' tomb, bringing spices to anoint His body, *"...He is risen; he is not here..."* (Mark 16:6).

Luke relates this amazing, miraculous event by asking those who came on a Sunday morning to Jesus' grave, *"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen"* (Luke 24:5,6).

John, in his account of the gospel story, related how the disciples of Jesus, including Peter and the *"other disciple whom Jesus loved"*, found the tomb empty (John 20:1-10).

The New Testament is filled with plain and emphatic teachings about the *living Christ* — who was dead, but was raised—*never to die again*. Hundreds of witnesses of our Lord's resurrection are mentioned throughout the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians chapter 15). When a successor to Judas was selected, it was required that the new apostle to be chosen must have been a *"witness"*, along with the other apostles, of *"His resurrection"* (Acts 1:22).

Men have marveled through the centuries concerning the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the world. However, when the truth of Jesus' resurrection is considered and believed, we can begin to understand why the message of the Gospel had so much power as it was boldly proclaimed *"first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, Samaria, and even unto the uttermost parts of the earth"* (Acts 1:8), and, as Paul wrote, *"to every creature which is under heaven"* (Colossians 1:23).

When we realize that the very heart (core) of the preaching of Christ is the reality of His glorious resurrection, and that He was,

in truth, raised never to die again (*"alive forevermore"*), we can understand why the enemies of the cross have, since the very beginning (Matthew 28:12-15), denied His resurrection and have sought diligently to keep others from believing in Jesus — the Savior, the Son of God. Let us not, therefore, be shocked or surprised when atheists and infidels make false claims that are intended to create doubt in the hearts of believers and those who may become believers and/or Christians. Yes, lies have been told. The "box with bones", the ossuary which some have speculated to be the "burial box of the family of Jesus", is not the first lie promoted by unbelievers, and it will not be the last. But be assured: **our Lord Jesus Christ is alive.** His tomb was, and is, empty.

What Is Your Best Place?

JIMMY W. COX

What is the best place for your *spiritual* being? There are only two spiritual realms: "in Christ" or in the world. You cannot be in both realms at the same time. Jesus said: *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad"* (Matthew 12:30).

"In Christ" is a place of personal choice. You are not automatically "in Christ" by physical birth. God does not automatically put you "in Christ" unless you make that choice.

We cannot be "in Christ" unless we hear His Gospel (Romans 1:16). The basic facts of the Gospel are: *"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). Yet, facts alone will not put us "in Christ". Hebrews 5:8,9 says Christ is the *"author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."*

Jesus taught His apostles for a little over three years. Just before He was to return to heaven, He said: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15,16).

Fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, His church had its

beginning (recorded in Acts 2:36,37). *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"*

Peter gave this answer to these penitent believers: *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:38). During His time on earth, Jesus told the people, *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). In Matthew 10:32,33, Jesus said that we must publicly confess Him.

To be "in Christ" we must hear the Gospel, believe the Gospel, repent of sins, confess our faith, and be baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-5). *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Faith Once for All Delivered"

JOHNNY RAMSEY

"Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Jesus died *"once at the end of the ages"* (Heb. 9:26) in order to defeat Satan and give us victory over sin and death.

"But now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die and after this cometh judgment, so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (Heb. 9:26-28). Likewise, the system of faith was **once** for all time given to redeem mankind.

We do not need another Savior, nor do we need a "latter-day revelation." The apostle Paul writes of Jesus, *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made complete"* (Col. 2:9-10). And the gospel of Jesus Christ, which was preached in the first century, is all we need now: *"I am not*

ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. 1:16). The New Testament is the everlasting covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 13:20). The Lord, by His death at Calvary, provides us with the message of redemption that will last till the end of the world. *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Obedience of the Faith

Many passages in "the last will and testament of Jesus Christ" teach us that the gospel is a **system of faith** that must be obeyed: *"Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of the faith among all the nations... But now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith"* (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). As noted in the Scripture which begins this article, *"the faith"* was *"once for all delivered"* to the saints. The apostle Peter wrote of God, *"His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"* (2 Pet. 1:3). That passage forever shows that any other message is superfluous.

The term, *"the faith,"* refers not simply to what someone believes, but to what God delivered that produces faith. In Acts 6:7, we learn that a *"great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."* In Acts 13, we learn that an evil man, Elymas, opposed *"the faith"* when he opposed the gospel which Paul preached. In Acts 24:24, a ruler by name of Felix came to hear Paul preach *"concerning the faith."* The *"law of faith"* (Rom. 3:27) requires *"obedience of faith"* (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). That is, *"the faith"* requires that people *"obey the gospel of Jesus Christ"* (2 Thes. 1:7). The familiar point of Rom. 1:16 tells us why: *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation."*

God Has Given No Latter-Day Revelation

Notice again, from 2 Pet. 1:3, that God has given us *"all things that pertain to life and to godliness"* through the preaching of the

apostles. Leaders of Mormonism, for instance, cannot produce one thing that pertains to life and godliness that the Bible does not already contain. Eighteen hundred years before Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, the system of faith was already complete and was being preached by the inspired apostles. In fact, in a discussion of this point, the apostle Paul gave some strict warnings about allowing any teaching other than what the apostles of Christ had then delivered. *"I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:6-8).

That passage forever shows the fallacy of accepting any latter-day revelation. Even if one or more of the apostles (the "we" of the passage) should preach a different gospel, the curse of God would be upon them. If an angel from heaven should preach a gospel different from what Peter, Paul and the others then preached, the curse of God would be upon him! So, even if there were an angel named "Moroni," he perverted truth if he ever spoke to Joseph Smith about a latter-day revelation, and the curse of God is upon him. Such a message would be 1800 years too late to be authentic. There is no empty place or vacuum for any message to fit into. The ***faith once for all*** had been revealed and delivered (Jude 3).

Some Still Oppose The Faith

The apostle Paul, speaking of his former life when he persecuted Christians, wrote: *"But they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc"* (Gal. 1:23). First, he opposed *"the faith."* Then, having been converted to Christ, he *"preached the faith."* The same apostle wrote to Timothy, *"But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons"* (1 Tim. 4:1). No wonder, then, that Jude 3 challenged the brethren - then and now - to *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."* What it took to save sinners in the first century is still required of sinners today. *"The faith"* has not changed!

The Old Testament closed, looking for the Messiah and a new

covenant to be established. *"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3:1).* The prophet Jeremiah wrote of that new covenant, which the Messiah (Christ) would author, and the prophecy is quoted in Heb. 8:8-12. *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . . . For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more."* He then adds in the next verse, *"In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old."* Jesus of Nazareth came, and by His message and miracles, He proved Himself to be the Messiah (John 20:30-31). The New Testament, which He gave us, closes looking only for the Lord to return as judge (John 5:22; 12:48; Rev. 22:12).

Jesus will not come to die for our sins again. He did that *"once for all"* nearly 2,000 years ago (Heb. 9:26). He will not come to reveal another covenant or another system of faith. He did that *"once for all"* nearly 2,000 years ago (Jude 3). Thank God for that divine arrangement. We are complete in Christ and His gospel. The book of Mormon, in 2 Nephi 29, calls those who think the Bible is all we need, "Fools." Is it really foolish to trust the Bible, when God tells us plainly that is all we need?

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Scriptures which Paul knew, and preached, in the first century will make us completely furnished in the spiritual realm. *"The faith which was once for all delivered"* will suffice!

The Devil's Preacher

CLEM THURMAN

We don't like to think about the devil. We don't like to think of people serving the devil. And we sure don't like to contemplate people **PREACHING** for the devil. But the Bible says that some do just that! *"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers,*

fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Notice that phrase again, *"his ministers."* These claim to be ministers of Christ, but they are really ministers of Satan

If Satan led *"his ministers"* to preach, what would be their message? It would have to serve the purpose of Satan, while at the same time persuading people it was from God. So what would a *"minister of Satan"* preach? If I wanted to preach what would serve the devil, what would I choose?

"Weaken Bible Authority"

"When ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thes. 2:13). If I were preaching for the devil, I would first try to weaken the authority of the Bible in the minds of people. I could do this by telling people that it was written by man's will and not by the inspiration of God, and that the Bible doesn't mean exactly what it says, that it is the *"spirit"* of the thing that counts. I would preach that we don't have to do exactly what the Bible says, for, *"It's what is in the heart that counts."*

"Choose Your Own Church"

"Upon this rock I will build my church. . . Is Christ divided?" (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 1:13). If I were preaching for the devil, I would preach that one church is as good as another. I would plead with folk to join the church of their choice. This would nullify the Lord's evaluation of the church, *"Which he purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). I would try to persuade my hearers that it is terribly narrow-minded to contend that all believers must be in the same church (John 17:20-21; Acts 2:47).

"Saved by Faith Only"

"Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead in itself. . . But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? . .

Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:17,20,24). If I preached for the devil, I would emphasize only those passages of Scripture that deal with faith. I would be very careful to avoid passages like Matt. 7:21-23, Luke 6:46, Rom. 6:16-18, James 1:21-25, 1 Pet. 1:22 and 1 John 2:3. Again, as

the devil's preacher, I would persuade folk that they don't have to DO exactly what the Bible says — if they have faith in their hearts, that is all that is important.

"Baptism is Non-Essential"

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . . Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?.. Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name" (Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3; Acts 22:16). Because baptism puts one *"into Christ"* (Gal. 3:27), if I were the devil's preacher, I would do all I could to get people to stop short of making the commitment which baptism involves. I would argue that baptism doesn't save, that one is saved before and without baptism. To persuade folk, I would quote those passages which deal with faith, and then claim. "Baptism isn't even mentioned in those passages!" I would be careful to steer people away from Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-6, 16-18 and 1 Pet. 3:21, etc., all of which show God's purpose for baptism.

"The Saved Cannot Be Lost"

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. . . Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 5:4). If I preached for the devil, I would try to persuade folk that they "cannot fall from grace." This would cause them to let down their guard and make the devil's penetration of influence into their lives that much easier. If someone asked about Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8), I would pretend he wasn't saved in the first place. If someone mentioned Gal. 5:4, I would claim that that passage applied only to the law of Moses. If someone brought up 2 Pet. 2:20-22, I would quickly change the subject!

Yes, the devil has ministers in the world today. They are deceiving people into *"almost"* (Acts 26:28) following Christ, but leaving them just short. Satan hasn't changed his tactics!

Paul's View Of The Church

WALTER SWAIN

The apostle Paul was an inspired writer and wrote a large portion of the New Testament. When he became a Christian, he

spent the rest of his life preaching and teaching the truth, thus expanding the borders of the kingdom. He died a faithful Christian (2 Timothy 4:6-8). We may assume his view of the church would be correct and that it is one we should all hold today. So what was Paul's understanding of the church?

Paul's view of the church was that it was grand and glorious (Ephesians 5:27). Rather than minimizing the church, he exalted it and lifted it up before the eyes of the world. He was willing to suffer in any way to help people enter into it. The glory of Christ was to be seen in the church (3:21). To Paul, the church was beautifully connected to Christ as the head of the body (Colossians 1:18), and Christ was to have preeminence in it. As its head, Jesus is the fullness of the body (Ephesians 1:22-23). Paul had no problem seeing the church as one because he viewed it as the body of Christ (4:4) and realized Christ has only one body.

Thus, Paul often stressed the oneness and unity of the church. To a divided church at Corinth in his day, he wrote a condemnation of their divided state over men and urged them to give up their allegiance to men and follow Christ alone (1 Corinthians 1:10-15). We can rightly assume that Paul would pronounce the same condemnation upon denominationalists today who give their allegiance to the authority of men over that of Christ. Paul strongly believed that divisions in the church over men were sinful. He believed that Jesus' prayer of unity of the church was to be followed (John 17:20-23) and that if the Lord prayed for such unity, it must be possible to have it.

Paul also saw the church as a unit made of many differing parts. In speaking of the church as a body, he taught that the one body has many different roles in it. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Romans 12:4-8, he urged individual Christians to use their special talents and abilities in the church to help it function and grow. Each member is to respect the roles of others because all play an important part in the body.

Paul's view of the church also included the truth that the church was the kingdom of God on earth. To the church at Colossae he wrote, "who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Colossians 1:13 ASV). Rather than viewing the kingdom as coming at some future time, Paul saw it on earth now and being delivered back to God when Jesus comes again (1 Corinthians 15:24). Paul was

not a premillennialist.

One other fact stands out in Paul's understanding of the church. He saw the church as a body commissioned to uphold and proclaim the truth (Ephesians 3:9-11; 1 Timothy 3:15). This fact is reflected in his writings and his actions. His epistles are filled with admonitions to preach the Word and to oppose false doctrine (2 Timothy 4:1-2). Those in error are to be disfellowshipped by the church if they refuse to give up their false teachings (Romans 16:17). His tireless efforts to carry the gospel to the lost and many persecutions testify to his zeal to teach the truth and to uphold the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:16-33).

Paul felt strongly about the one true church of Christ. He saw it as the glorious body of Christ, the kingdom of God on earth. Because of this belief, he taught the truth about the church and sought to keep it pure doctrinally. He stood for the unity of the body and opposed all who would divide it. We would do well to have Paul's view of the church and to follow it today.



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(See Rule 3)

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