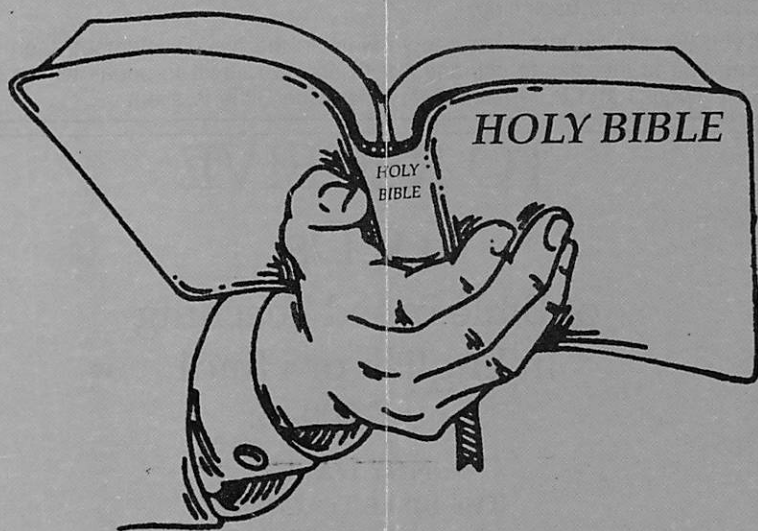


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# THE BIBLE TEACHER



## **BACK TO BASICS**

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18). His promise was fulfilled when His church came into existence on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter commanded the multitude assembled on that day: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38). Those who gladly received his word were baptized (Acts 2:41), as a result three thousand were added to the church on that day by the Lord Himself (Acts 2:47). That was the beginning of Christ's church.

Of what denomination did those three thousand become members? Our contention is that they joined no denomination. Indeed, denominationalism such as we know in today's world did not even exist then. They had simply obeyed the Gospel and were added by the Lord to His church. They wore no sectarian name, adopted no denominational creed, and belonged to no ecclesiastical hierarchy. They were simply children of God, members of the church, were called Christians (Acts 11:26).

Churches of Christ today everywhere plead for a return to that same church with that same simplicity. We do not claim to be a denomination. Our goal is to be that church—nothing more, nothing less—just basic New Testament Christians as people were in the first century.

We teach the same plan of salvation—faith, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins. (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39). We practice the same worship—teaching, giving, observing the Lord's Supper, praying, and singing praises to God. (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Ephesians 5:19). We follow the same congregational organization—elders, deacons, saints (Philippians 1:1), without offices and positions unknown to the Christians in the beginning.

If you want to be just what people were in the New Testament, then we urge you to investigate churches of Christ. We strive to speak where the Bible speaks and to remain silent where the Bible is silent.

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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

**Vol. 44**

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**No. 1**



## **What Does the Bible Teach?**

***Reckon Yourselves To Be Dead To Sin, But Alive To God***

IN THIS present age when people everywhere are seeking and demanding all kinds of freedom, freedom to speak, to write, and to do whatever seems right to them, God, however, expect from those, who fear Him and want to honor Him in their lives, to live on this earth in the manner He has shown to man in His book, the Bible. The church (*the body of the saved ones, called out of the world*), Christ had promised to build and to which He Himself adds those whom He saves (Acts 2:38, 47), is the body of God's people whom He has called to be holy (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Never before, technologically speaking, in the history of humanity, such a tremendous progress has ever been made, as has been in the last few decades. Today we are living in the "High Tech age" of computer, television, digital camera, CD—DVD, and mobile phones, etcetera. Even for people who were born just over fifty or sixty years ago, it is most certainly a different world altogether. On the one hand, through the use of many such gadgets and devices people everywhere have been benefitted in various ways, but on the other hand, these very things are being used by many unscrupulous people to corrupt millions of minds and destroy their lives. Evil and wicked people have used these very things to commit many heinous crimes, such as acts of terrorism and violence, rapes, heists, killings, and many others such like.

As Christians, we have been exhorted, to "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(Romans 6:11). Christians live in the same world as all others do. They are not immune to anything of this world. They have same needs as all others. They have, in their homes, television, internet, cell phones, and other such gadgets. But they are expected to realize that they are in this world but are not of this world. (1 Corinthians 5:9, 10). We have been urged not to conform to the world but to be transformed in the image of Christ by following Him each day. (Romans 12:1,2 ; 1Peter 2:21). Moreover, the Bible teaches, the body of a Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19, 20), that is, by or through the written word of God, which is the instrument of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16, 17 ; 2 Peter 1:20, 21), He lives in the Christian, to guide and help him to walk daily according to His will, "teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." (Titus 2:12-14).

According to the Bible, when one becomes a Christian, one is washed from all sins by the blood of Christ, when one believes in Christ and repents from sins and is baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3, 4). The Christian has been sanctified or set apart from the world and has been justified or made right and qualified to inherit heaven, because of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for his sins. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). But the Bible also warns: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). The Christian, the follower of Christ, therefore, must reckon himself/herself to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ.

### **Putting Off The Old Man Of Sin**

## LESSON 9 **SUICIDE** J. C. CHOATE

AS YOU know, we have been studying some subjects that helps

us to understand the importance of putting off the old man of sin and then putting on the new man of righteousness in Christ Jesus. By comparison, this is like stepping out of a dark room into a room full of light or being a non-believer and then becoming a believer in Christ. I think you get the picture.

We are going to continue with these lessons now by making a study of SUICIDE. Suicide simply means self-murder or where one kills himself. This is a sin against God and a sin against one's self, family, and it is against the laws of most countries.

Suicide is not something that is new, It has been going on practically from the beginning of time. Way back in Old Testament times we recall how the first king of Israel, Saul, committed suicide. He had been chosen of God to be King over God's people, but had spent his life time in fighting wars against his enemies. Turning to 1 Samuel 31:1-6 we read, "Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Binadab, and Melchishua, Saul's sons. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together."

Another famous example of suicide is that of Judas Iscariot. Judas was one of the twelve apostles of Christ. He walked with the Lord, heard his teachings, saw his miracles, but in the end he betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Who knows why he did this? There have been many speculations. Perhaps he was trying to force Christ to act against the Romans, but we don't know. Surely thirty pieces of silver was not very much if he needed money. But what was done was done. We read, "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and

departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me." (Matthew 27:3-10). Later we read in Acts 1, at a time in which Peter and the other apostles were involved in choosing a replacement for Judas, how Peter explained, "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; in as much as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his place let another take." (Acts 1:16-20).

But why did these men, and others, commit suicide? Not only that, but why do people commit suicide today? And I might add that in our own time there are many who commit this tragic act. A large percentage of them are young. But why?

There are of course many reasons for suicide but none of them are justified. For example, there are those who commit suicide out of fear. Saul feared that the enemy would capture him, torture him, and abuse him. As he saw it, death was the only way out. Likewise with Judas. He was sorry for what he had done, evidently, when he saw that things were not working out as he thought they would. He feared then the disgrace that he had brought upon himself and what the future held for him. Not thinking clearly perhaps, then he went out and hanged himself. In Acts 16 we read of Paul and Silas being in prison and they had been miraculously released. When the jailor saw that they had escaped then he drew his sword and was about to take his life when Paul shouted, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." (Acts 16:28). The jailor was in charge of these men and he was guarding them with his life. He knew that if they escaped then he would be executed. He feared this and rather

than to be disgraced and humiliated then he thought it would be better to take his own life. Of course he had some unusual prisoners. They didn't want him to commit suicide, but they wanted him to obey the Lord Therefore they taught this man and his family and as a result they obeyed God and became Christians. This is one time that the story had a good ending.

But others also commit suicide because of fear of failure in their examinations, like young people often experience. There is so much pressure put on them that they cannot stand it. Then there are patients who have cancer or some other disease or sickness and they fear all of the pain and the agonizing days ahead for themselves and their families and so they commit suicide.

Others commit suicide because they are mental cases. There are those who are caught committing a crime and rather than to face the disgrace of a trial and being sent to prison then they kill themselves. Some take their life to hurt others, maybe their father or mother, or someone that they love but that person doesn't love them. With others, there are heavy pressures put on them, such as being called on to pay off their heavy debts. Then there are women who are mistreated, abused, and disgraced, and so they kill themselves. Others set themselves on fire or kill themselves in some other way to protest over something. Some commit Suicide for religious reasons.

And on and on it goes. But when you take a close look at suicide, and why people commit suicide, you begin to observe that most people who do this type of thing do it without having time to think things through. They are mentally disturbed, have great pressures placed on them, find themselves in a very difficult situation at the time, and so before they have time to think about it, to come up with a solution, or to talk to a friend, or just anyone, then they resort to suicide as being the way out. Of course this is not the way out and there needs to be more teaching on this subject to show that this is wrong and to try to help people to come up with some answers.

To begin with, suicide is wrong, it is a sin. The Bible teaches clearly, "Thou shalt not kill." (Romans 13:9). This not only means that we should not kill others but it also means that we should not kill ourselves. Once one commits this sin then naturally it cannot be repented of and that means then that one will be lost, provided he was an accountable being. But that is one reason why we must be careful in judging the suicide victim. We don't know what his

mental state was, and therefore we must leave him to God. It is too late to help that person, but we can try to make sure that it does not happen again by trying to teach those around us about the seriousness of this, and by helping them in various ways to overcome their problems and to inform them where to go to get some help.

The Christian has everything to live for. He has his life, his soul, his family, his Lord to serve, and hope of a better world to come. He has God to look to for help and the Lord has promised him that he will never leave him or forsake him but will help him to overcome every temptation and to make a way of escape for him. He has the privilege of prayer, and therefore to be able to talk to the Lord about his problems and to ask him to help him find solutions. He has the Bible, the word of God, to go to allow the Lord to talk to him about these matters. He has his brethren to fellowship and to stay in contact with. Furthermore, as Christians we are to bear one another's burdens, and that means that we are to help each other in time of need. (Galatians 6:2).

We are told in the scriptures that our body is the temple of God, where God, Christ, and the Spirit dwell. (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:16). Likewise, as Christians we dwell in Christ. (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26, 27). The Lord teaches us to have faith, to be strong, and to have self-control. (Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 6:10; 1 Peter 5:7).

There are so many teachings in the scriptures that are directed to us to help us in our difficult times with problems, pressures, and Special needs. All of this then will give us the strength and courage to go on respecting life, loving life, and never giving up. When we die we want to die a natural death, and certainly one that is not self-inflicted.

If you are not a Christian, then it will be much more difficult for you to face life and its problems because the world will be against you, and who and what really do you have to look to for help you in your most trying times? Even then we would pray that you will turn to your love for life, your family members, friends, and so on, to help you, but greater than that, we would like to encourage you to look to God and his word for help and direction. The best way to do that is to become a believer in God, and Christ as the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized in water that you might be saved. If you will do that then Christ will save you (Mark 16:16), and add you to his church. (Acts



2:47). Then you will have the assurance that the Lord will be with you and help you with your problems and troubles. Not only so, but if you'll be faithful to him, then he'll never leave you, but will see you through to victory with the promise that finally he will give you eternal life. (Revelation 2:10).

## JESUS AND THE CHURCH

ED DYCHE

THE LORD'S people have long concluded that Jesus and the church are inseparable. Clearly, we owe much to the inspired apostle Paul for emphasizing the corporate nature of the church. The individualism of its members needs to be seen in this oneness.

The word "church" is found 77 times in the New Testament. Jesus used the word three times - recorded once in Matthew 16:18 and twice in Matthew 18:17. The use of the word in these three references is important.

The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*. The word is made up of two words: a preposition meaning "out of" and a verb meaning "to call." Jesus used this term to describe the very nature of His people. We are a called out people (Acts 2:39; 1 Peter 2:9), purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28) "in order that [we] may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9 NRSV). Some of the metaphors used in the New Testament to establish the inseparability of Jesus and the church remind us of the significance of the one body and further enhance our appreciation for unity. These metaphors are: the body, building, kingdom, temple and family. Using the word "metaphor" instead of "figure" or "image" is preferred because by definition a metaphor means "to carry across" - so one thing represents another (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E.W. Bullinger, p. 736).

The body metaphor is found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Paul addressed the unity into which we have been baptized. "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (v. 13). Although there may be a correctness to the phrase "by one spirit are we all baptized into one body" (κνν) indicating the agency of the Spirit, it is perhaps better rendered "in the one Spirit" which has to do with the unity of the Spirit.

Furthermore, it is through the Spirit that we maintain this unity as we find Paul's appeal in Ephesians 4:1-4. In verse 3 he says, make "every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit" (NRSV). This metaphor of the body expresses so well how many members make one body with Jesus as its head.

The second metaphor is that of a building. Already observed in a sense in Matthew 16:16-18, "I will build my church" (v. 18), we find it enhanced in Ephesians 2:19-22 where Paul says that we are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole structure [building] is joined together" (vv. 20-21). Jesus is called the "foundation" (1 Corinthians 3:11) and the "living stone" (1 Peter 2:4) indicating the building metaphor. As a result God's people are "living stones ... built into a spiritual house" (v. 5). This very terminology also reveals the inseparability of Jesus and His people.

The third metaphor to consider is that of a kingdom. Jesus said that He would give the "keys of the kingdom" to Peter (Matthew 16:19). This was the kingdom He spoke of as He began His ministry (Mark 1:14-15) and was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14). It is a kingdom not of the world (John 18:36) but is in the world. That is, its origin is from heaven and not from men; Jesus rules His kingdom as "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16). Jesus said that some "will not taste of death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power" (Mark 9:1). This kingdom is going to be delivered to God the Father at the end of time (1 Corinthians 15:24). Having spoken of it as being "at hand" in Mark 1:14-15 (KJV) and some not departing in death until it would come, the conclusion is that the kingdom has come. Again this metaphor shows the inseparability of our Lord and His people under the image of kingdom.

The fourth metaphor is that of a temple. This metaphor is found also in Ephesians 2:19-22 where the metaphor of a building is used. In verse 21 it states, "In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (NRSV). The Greek word for temple here is used for the dwelling place of God. Although it can be used for the body as the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19), it generally has the idea of God dwelling among His people. Its significance is found in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 when Paul writes: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [You here is plural and thus signifies

the church.] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." In addition, the temple had priests who served there. Jesus is said to be our "high priest" (Hebrews 4:14-15), and we are said to be priests of God (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). The metaphor of the "temple of God" makes the Lord and His people inseparable.

The final metaphor shows the inseparability of Jesus and the church as the family concept in the New Testament. In Ephesians 5, Paul uses the analogy of the husband and wife to illustrate Jesus and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). There is absolutely no finer passage to deal with the marriage relationship. The fact that the church is the bride is evident from such statements as "I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2), and "Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). The very terminology used to describe the people of God in the New Testament is brothers and sisters with God as our Father, all expressing the family metaphor.

Jesus and the church are inseparable. If He is the Savior of the body, the foundation of the building, the King of the kingdom, the High Priest in the temple, and the husband of the wife, then one must admit that all of these metaphors combined establish the inseparability of Christ and His people. May we all therefore continue to appreciate more and more what the New Testament teaches concerning our Lord and His people.

## JESUS AND SALVATION

LON MOHONDRO

IF A person should face a significantly dangerous situation, two things would be of immediate concern. Can he handle the situation himself. If not, who is nearby that he may call on for help?

Many people do not recognize the danger of losing their souls eternally. The thought of saving one's self must be dismissed as impossible. Reaching eternity depends on someone else, someone eminently acquainted with the process of salvation and eternal destination. That someone is the One who has always been there and who is there now - Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9 NKJV).

How was Jesus granted such a position? Peter said that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). He was foreordained to that position before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). From the time that Adam disobeyed God and sin entered the world, the heavenly Father has continued to maintain His love for man and has worked His plan for the restoration of fellowship with man and for eternal salvation. The culmination of that plan was the sending of His Son into the world. Jesus said Himself that "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

If Jesus had simply made His entry into the world, lived His life, and then exited in whatever fashion the Father chose, without leaving a word of instruction to be followed, sinful man would have marveled at His sinless life and His cruel death but would have lacked information, motive and instruction to follow His example.

With the coming of the Son of God also came the message from the Father. It held the key for the forgiveness of sin and for the salvation of man's eternal soul. That message is called the gospel. It is the Word of God. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth reminding them that he had declared good news to them. That good news would save them if they would hold fast that word that he preached to them.

Jesus had said that the gospel must "be preached to all the nations" (Mark 13:10). As He was about to return to the Father, He instructed the apostles to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Then He added, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16).

The gospel is the Father's message that declares His gracious will. "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God" (John 3:34). Jesus stated very clearly: "If anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world" (12:47). Jesus' words were and are "the words of eternal life" (6:68). The Son did not speak for Himself, but He spoke words given Him by the Father (12:49). He came into the world to do the Father's will, and He did it perfectly and completely. "When the fullness of the time had come, God sent

forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). Salvation is from God because He is the God of salvation (Psalm 68:20).

Salvation is the result of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus Christ shed His blood when He went to the Cross. "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Jesus Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Jesus declared His mission when He said: "The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11). Peter boldly declared before the Chief Priest and other leaders of the Jews: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the author and the source "of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Salvation of our eternal souls cannot be separated from deliverance from sin. It is given by God, the Father, to those who accept His conditions of faith, repentance, confession and baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus instructed in Matthew 28:19. He is our Savior, and there is no other. Jesus and salvation are inseparably linked. Men cannot have one without the other.

## JESUS AND THE HOPE OF HEAVEN

JODY L. APPLE

HEBREWS 11 is well known for the great truths it teaches concerning biblical faith. The numerous examples of those who heeded divine directives and submitted to them in willful obedience repeatedly reinforces faith's true nature, but faith is not the only topic at the forefront of Hebrews 11. The opening verses of this chapter just as powerfully demonstrate the significance of hope in God's eternal plan.

The first three verses of Hebrews 11 form the basis of hope and its relationship to God's plan of salvation.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:1-3 NKJV).

### OUR HOPE IN CHRIST

Consider how hope fits into God's scheme of redemption:

**What hope is.** The Bible describes hope as "good" (2 Thessalonians 2:16), "blessed" (Titus 2:13), and "living" (1 Peter 1:3). It is listed in 1 Corinthians 13:13 as one of the eternal verities.

**What hope does.** Hope does many things. It produces rejoicing (Romans 15:13; Hebrews 3:6), causes confidence (Hebrews 3:6), causes us to live life to the fullest in Christ (1 Peter 1:3), allows us to find God (Acts 17:27), causes us to expect the best in our brethren (2 Corinthians 8:5), provides consolation (2 Thessalonians 2:16), prompts others to seek God from what they see in us (1 Peter 3:15), induces patience (1 Thessalonians 1:3), provides motivation for us to defend what we believe (1 Peter 3:15), and prompts us to be bold (Philippians 1:20).

Most importantly, we are saved in hope. In Romans 8:24-25, the Bible says: "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."

**Scriptures and hope.** The Scriptures provide a basis for hope because the Scriptures produce faith (Romans 15:4). Our hope is also contingent upon God's promises that are revealed to us in His Word (Acts 26:6-7; 2 Peter 1:4).

**Hope and faith; hope and the gospel.** Our hope is based on faith and its accompanying righteousness. It is through faith that we have access into God's grace. It is because we have heard and obeyed the gospel that we have hope of eternal life (Romans 5:2-5; Galatians 5:5; Ephesians 1:18; Colossians 1:5, 23; Hebrews 11:1). The interconnection of faith and hope is keenly shown in 1 Peter 1:21: "who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

**The hope of the gospel is greater than that of the Law of Moses.** The New Testament often compares the hope of the gospel to the Law of Moses. In every instance, the hope of the gospel is shown to be the only hope that exists. (2 Corinthians 3:12; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 3:6; 6:11, 18-19; 7:19; 10:23)

**Hope and grace.** It is by faith that we access God's grace, and it is in, on, and by God's grace that we have the hope of glory (Romans 5:2,4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Peter 1:13).

**Hope and the promises of God.** The promises of God, in which Abraham placed his faith, are often held up in the New Testament as an encouragement to keep Christians focused on faithfulness. Paul often extols Abraham as the epitome of faith because he believed in God's promises. He is also characterized as a man of great hope for the same reason; he believed the promises of God. The surety of God's Word and its promises serve as the firm foundation for both faith and hope (Acts 26:6-7; 28:20; Ephesians 2:12).

**Hope and the resurrection.** One of the greatest promises that God has made is that of the hope of the resurrection of the faithful, of which Christ's own resurrection is a guarantee.

1. David rejoiced in hope of Christ's prospective resurrection (Acts 2:26).
2. Paul had a hope of the resurrection in God (Acts 24:15; 23:6).
3. The hope of the resurrection through Christ is for all faithful Christians (1 Peter 1:3).

**Hope, eternal life and salvation.** Our only real hope in this life is in the salvation available through Christ. That hope of salvation is not only for joy and peace in this life, but it is also in the prospect of eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:19; Ephesians 1:18; Colossians 1:5, 27; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 2:13; 3:7; 1 Peter 1:13).

**Hope and the salvation of others.** In addition to giving praise to God for their own salvation, early Christians expressed concern and hope for the salvation of others (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 4:13; 1 Peter 3:15; Romans 15:12 [the hope of salvation for Gentiles]).

**There is one hope.** The Bible teaches that there is one hope, and that hope is in Christ (Ephesians 4:4; 2:12).

**Hope and the Godhead.** The Scriptures teach that our hope is in and because of God (1 Peter 1:21; Romans 15:13; Acts 24:15; Hebrews 6:18); in Christ (1 Timothy 1:1; Colossians 1:27); and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:5). Our hope is also said to be founded on the promises of God (Acts 26:6-7). God, described as "the God of hope" (Romans 15:13), cannot lie. Because of this immutable aspect of His nature, we have hope (Hebrews 6:18).

**Hope and Christian living.** The Bible teaches that the hope

we have of eternal life should compel us to live pure lives before God in this world (1 John 3:3).

**Hope and joy.** The Scriptures teach us that we have a reason to rejoice in the hope of eternal life (Romans 12:12).

**Without hope.** Without hope, souls are outside of Christ, lost, without God and separated from God's promises (Ephesians 2:12).

**Hope's purpose.** Hope is frequently connected to "things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Hope is designed to take us to the end (1 Peter 1:13; Hebrews 3:6), for our life beyond this life (1 Corinthians 15:19), to take us to glory (Colossians 1:27), and for eternal life (Titus 1:2).

### WHERE IS OUR HOPE?

In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul focuses his attention on the location of saving hope. Note the number of times hope is shown to be "in Christ."

1. In verse 12 Paul states that when they were without Christ or outside of Christ, the Gentiles had no hope and were "without God in the world."
2. In verse 13 we learn that the Gentiles, who obeyed God's Word, were in Christ and were now near to God "by the blood of Christ." Both Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 inform us that the blood of Christ and the redemption that it brings, is in Christ. Thus, for the Gentiles to have hope through the blood of Jesus, they had to be in Christ.
3. In verses 14-16 we see that Jews and Gentiles are made one man "in one body through the cross."
4. In verses 17-18 we discover that it is through the preaching of peace that the Gentiles were brought to Christ, and that through Christ both Jews and Gentiles have access to God.
5. In verses 19-22 we note that both Jews and Gentiles are part of the same building or temple and that they are "built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (v. 22).

All of these verses, and others too, indicate that our hope is in Christ, and in His body - His spiritual building, the church. When we by one Spirit are baptized into that one body (1 Corinthians 12:13), we become children of God through our faith in Christ, and so put on Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). Having been added to the church by God through baptism (Acts 2:41, 47), we demonstrate our submission to the one faith, enter the one body, and begin a new life in the one hope of our calling (Ephesians 4:4-6).



Outside of Christ there is no hope. All the hopes and dreams of men outside Christ fail to ultimately satisfy. Men may hope for fame and fortune. If they obtain it, what have they gained? As Jesus said: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:25-26). If we have hope only in this world, we are most pitiable (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Inside of Christ there is hope. While on this earth we have blessings, privileges, opportunities and joys in Christ that are of inestimable value (Ephesians 1:3), but even these fail to compare to the heavenly hope portrayed in God's glorious Word. The hope of eternity in the presence of God the Father, Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit compels us to have hope. But one day, like Christ, we too will go beyond the veil (Hebrews 6:18-19; 9:3, 8; 10:20).

Faith serves as the foundation of our hope. Together, faith and hope prepare us for an eternity in heaven.

## JESUS AND COMMANDMENTS

OWEN D. OLBRICHT

AT THE beginning of each semester, I give my university students a questionnaire. Two of the questions are: What do you like about the university? What do you dislike? Almost half of them state that they dislike the rules.

Disregarding, breaking or bending regulations is becoming more and more prevalent. Those in our society and in the church who disrespect rules are creating many problems. Most of us desire to do what we want to do, but restrictions are necessary to prevent us from destroying our selves and others.

If the laws of the land, standards of society, and laws of a higher Being do not control our conduct, we have no standards to control our lives. If we live as Israel lived in the days of the judges, we will have the problems they had. "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). The results were the horrible practices described in the book of Judges. There must be rules to govern society and the church.

Israel did better when they had a judge, a leader and an authority figure (Judges 2:19) who expected them to respect God and obey His Law.

## **LORD JESUS**

For those who are Christians, Jesus is our King (John 18:37), our Lord (Acts 2:36), our Master (2 Timothy 2:21) and our Ruler (Matthew 2:6). He is head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23) and the one Lawgiver (James 4:12). His church is to respond to Him by submitting to Him (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Jesus cannot be separated from His commandments. To separate Him from His commandments is to separate Him from His position as head of the church and ruler of the universe under whose feet everything is put into subjection (1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:20-23). He has first place in everything (Colossians 1:18).

## **ANTINOMIANISM**

Early in the history of the church, an attitude arose that Christians are not under law to Christ because of grace offered through Jesus. J. Daane in the article, "Antinomianism" (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 182) gave this definition: "A theology which interprets Paul's teaching on law and grace (Romans 7:8) to mean that the Christian is so wholly in grace that he is in no sense under the law. In this original form, antinomianism arose within the New Testament period, as is evident from Paul's reaction to it (Galatians 5:13ff)." 1

If there is no law, there is no violation and no sin (Romans 4:15). If there is no law, there is no need of grace since grace has to do with sin (6:1-2). However, we are under the law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21) and are in need of grace because we are sinners who have violated His will (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10) as revealed in law (1 John 3:4).

A Lord cannot rule unless he has rules to be observed. The attitude that Jesus has no commandments to obey fails to take into account that He is the Supreme Ruler of the universe and head of the church. Such a viewpoint overlooks Jesus' teachings.

He asked, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Failure to obey His commandments is a failure to respect Him as Lord.

## **JESUS' COMMANDMENTS**

The commandments of Jesus are backed with the authority of the Father. Jesus said, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment

is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me" (John 12:49-50).

When we obey the commandments of Jesus, we are obeying God. Those who enter the kingdom are those who do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21). Similarly, the "blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it" (Luke 11:28).

Obedience to Jesus' commandments is the way we can show that we love Him (John 14:15, 21, 23). Those who do not love Him are those who do not keep His commandments (v. 24). We remain in His love only if we keep His commandments (John 15:10) and are His friends if we do what He has commanded (v. 14).

Based on His having all authority in heaven and earth, He told the apostles to teach those who were baptized to observe all that He commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). The apostles were given Jesus' teaching through the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13). This is why the early church continued in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42), because in so doing they were obeying what Jesus had commanded.

Jesus expects those who become His disciples to obey Him and keep His commandments. Those who seek to separate Jesus from His commandments are seeking to dethrone Him.

### **THE APOSTLES AND JESUS' COMMANDMENTS**

Paul believed Christians are to obey the Lord's commandments. He wrote, "What matters is the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Corinthians 7:19). He believed that his writings contained "the Lord's commandment" (14:37). He stated, "For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:2). Based on this fact, Paul expected the Thessalonians to do what he commanded (2 Thessalonians 3:4, 6, 12).

Peter believed Jesus had given commandments and that these were to be respected. He wrote that Christians were to remember "the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles" (2 Peter 3:2).

John taught that we show that we know Jesus by keeping His commandments. Those who say they know Him and do not obey His commandments are liars (1 John 2:3-4). We receive what we ask of Him and abide in Him if we keep His commandments (3:22, 24). We make known our love of God if we obey His commandments (5:2-3). Observing God's commandments is important (Revelation 14:12).

## **WORKS SALVATION**

Some argue that "commandment keeping" is "works salvation," which, they say is to be rejected (Ephesians 2:8-9). If by our works we are seeking to pay for our sins, we would be seeking salvation by works. Jesus has provided and completed our salvation by submitting to the hands of sinners who crucified Him. To receive the salvation He has completed for us, we must obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9). Obedience implies the necessity of response to an injunction or a law. As a Lawgiver (James 4:12), Jesus has a law (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2). A law is made up of commandments, even as was The Law given to Israel (Ephesians 2:15).

## **WHICH COMMANDMENTS?**

Others consider that since all people neglect some of the commandments, violating one commandment is no worse than violating any other commandment. The next step in the argument is that, if this is true, God's grace will cause Him not to take into account the failures of all who trust Him regardless of which commandments are broken. The conclusion is then drawn that God will save those who have not been baptized, for the neglect of baptism is no worse than neglecting any other commandment of God.

The fallacy in this reasoning is that God has certain requirements before He will forgive sins (Acts 10:43; 2:38; 3:19; 22:16). Neglect of any one of these would disqualify one from being forgiven (Matthew 10:33; Luke 13:3, 5; John 3:3, 5; 8:24). Once we are saved (Romans 5:1), the blood of Jesus will forgive us if we walk in the light, repent and confess our sins in prayer (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-9).

Those who excuse disobedience because forgiveness is ours through God's grace overlook the fact that we are not to regard sin lightly simply because grace is extended to us (Romans 6:1-2). This would be an insult to God's grace (Hebrews 10:29). God's requirements that may seem small to us are important to God because our disregard for what we may consider the smallest of them indicates a disrespectful attitude toward God Himself. "He who is unrighteous in a very little thing, is unrighteous also in much" (Luke 16:10). Jesus taught that the weightier things were to be "done without neglecting the others" (Matthew 23:23)—evidently what might seem to be the less weighty things.

## MERCY AND NOT SACRIFICE

Some have dismissed Jesus' commandments because Jesus quoted Hosea concerning God wanting "mercy and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6 KJV; Matthew 9:13; 12:7). In the setting of the Hosea passage, God was telling Israel that He wanted a bending of their will to serve Him willingly instead of sacrifice from willing sinners. This meant that sacrifice was acceptable only when Israel was being responsive to God's will.

Jesus used this passage in dealing with the Jews who were careful to sacrifice according to The Law but were not so careful to show the mercy required by The Law. Jesus and His disciples were eating with known sinners. The Jews criticized Jesus for doing this (Matthew 9:10-11). Jesus was breaking no law in this case. He was showing compassion for those who were lost. The Jews were willing to sacrifice but not to show mercy toward those who were sinners. Jesus showed them that God wanted compassion for the lost instead of just the burning of sacrifices.

The setting is different in Matthew 12:1-7. Jesus and His disciples were picking and eating grain as they passed through a field on the Sabbath. Jesus knew that the intent of The Law did not consider this manual labor. The priests circumcised on the Sabbath which was not considered a violation of The Law by the Jews. They were strict in keeping various aspects of The Law but willing to overlook what they desired to overlook. Showing compassion to those who were hungry was more important than burning sacrifices.

In both these cases Jesus was not advocating disobeying The Law. Instead He was seeking to help the Jews understand that they were emphasizing one aspect of The Law to the degree that they were blind to the mercy expected by The Law. He was not teaching that God did not expect obedience to His commandments. God sought obedience of all His commandments, which included sacrifice without neglecting God's other expectations.

Commenting on this teaching, Jack Lewis wrote: "The saying does not forbid sacrifice but says that mercy (which Jesus accused the Pharisees of lacking in Matthew 23:23) is the more important of the two. The disciples should be pitied for their hunger. Mercy toward them is more acceptable to God than are the sacrifices of the altar".

## CONCLUSION

Jesus cannot be separated from His commandments. Without

commandments His will as Lord, King, Ruler, Master and Lawgiver cannot be known. Those who do not obey His laws fail to show Him proper respect. Calling Jesus, "Lord," while failing to obey Him as Lord, is to separate Him from His commandments. The way we respond to His commandments is the way we respond to Him (Matthew 25:35-45). Jesus and His commandments are inseparable.

## THE CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

RONALD D. BRYANT

IN HIS death on the cross Jesus secured salvation. In that cross is the only place where salvation is to be found. It is also the place where sin and evil have been judged and where God's holiness and justice have been revealed. This event is the moment that defines history and to which all future hopes are bound. It is because of God's judgment, justice, and holiness that the redeemed are called to live, love, and serve.

The redeemed exist as a blood-bought body, the church, as a result of this event. Because of the work of God through the cross, because of the triumph of God in His majestic power and holiness, the church is called to be bold in its proclamation of the Gospel, confident in its mission, and joyful in its ministry as it acknowledges the fact that it has been bought with blood, pardoned from sin, and freed to walk and serve in the light.

The church has been called to hold forth the message of the cross, to preach the will of God faithfully in a world that is ruled by darkness (see 1 Timothy 3:15). God's people have been charged with the work of telling the world what God has said about its sin and the destiny of the sinful. It has not been called to speculate about matters not revealed, nor to develop its own message or agenda, nor to become religious entrepreneurs for the religionists with a worldly appetite. It is called to make known God's judgment of humanity in the cross, and to declare the coming of His final judgment (see 2 Corinthians 5:1-11).

The people of God are possessed with the conviction that God's glory requires judgment, and they await in hope the moment when the will of God will be forever placed upon the throne and error will be forever banished to the ash heap of time and timely things.

The church longs for the coming of the day of transition, when

"time shall be no more" and to the privilege of entering the home of the soul where "night shall be no more" and the saved will "need no light of lamp nor of the sun, for the Lord God will be their light" (see Revelation 22:5). And in all this, the church clings to the cross, and because of the cross, it clings to the hope of life eternal.

## DOES "THE TRUTH" EXIST?

VICTOR M. ESKEW

THE WORD "the" is a "definite article". Webster states that a definite article is used "... to indicate that a following noun or noun equivalent refers to someone or something that is unique or exists as only one at a time." To illustrate, let's put the word "the" before the word "picture". *The picture won first prize in the county fair.* "The" refers to a unique picture and only one picture.

Why is it that we can understand this principle, but then have great difficulty with it when the word "the" is put before the word "truth"? Let us again seek to illustrate our point. Jesus said: *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). The words "the truth" make truth unique and singular in nature. There are not many truths that exist. Only one divine truth has been set forth for mankind.

If only one truth exists and that truth is found in the Word of God (John 17:17), why are so many conflicting "truths" forthcoming from the religious world? Note the following examples:

1. Some say that man is saved by faith only. Others say that man is not saved by faith only.
2. Some say that the church to which one belongs is not important. Others say there is only one true church.
3. Some say that baptism in water is essential to salvation. Others say that baptism is not involved in the salvation process.
4. Some say that man can still perform miracles. Others say that the age of miracles has ceased.
5. Some say instrumental music in worship to God is acceptable. Others say instrumental music in worship is sinful.
6. Some say denominationalism is a good, wholesome concept. Others say the Bible condemns denominationalism.

7. Some say Jesus is an eternal Being. Others teach that Jesus was the first created Being.
8. Some say man can't fall from grace once he is saved. Others say man can so sin as to lose his eternal salvation.

These are just 8 examples. Hundreds more could be given, but these are sufficient. If one truth exists, why are there so many conflicting doctrines in the religious world? Why does one group say: "We teach the truth of the Gospel", and another group says exactly the same thing, yet the doctrines they proclaim are in direct opposition to each other? There is absolutely no way both doctrines can be truth! Both could be error, but both cannot be truth.

Many will allow two men to teach contrasting doctrines and affirm that both of these men teach "the" truth. One argument that is often made springs from the interpretation of truth. When one person disagrees with another person, it will often be said: "Well, that is just your **interpretation**." Think about that for a moment. The Bible declares that there is **one truth**, but man says there can be several different **interpretations of truth**. If that is the case, then each man becomes his own god. One's interpretation of truth becomes the truth for him.

This interpretation idea basically states that God did not give us a Book that all of us can understand alike. That is an odd affirmation in light of several passages of Scripture in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 1:10 exhorts us, saying: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."*

Philippians 3:16 gives a similar charge: *"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."*

Romans 15:5,6 provides yet similar instructions: *"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Jesus Christ: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* All of God's children should be of one mind and walking by the same rule, perfectly joined together with no divisions existing among them.

To adhere to this simple Bible teaching would require that everyone study the Bible much more and be willing to face up to "the truth".



In 1 Timothy 2:3, 4, Paul wrote: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

Dear readers, there is one truth and one correct interpretation of truth. By comparing all that the Scriptures say on a subject, the Bible interprets itself. Let each of us seek for the truth diligently and give up all ideas that conflict with it! The wise writer of old put it in these words: *"Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction and understanding"* (Proverbs 23:23).

## HONESTLY EXAMINING THE WORD

CHAD RAMSEY

PEOPLE HAVE difficulty separating their preconceived ideas (or traditional views) from their interpretation of the Scriptures. For example, if one believes that the use of instrumental music in worship to God is acceptable, he will look for ways to justify this practice. When no authority can be found, in many instances he will continue to argue for his belief rather than give up the practice.

This rebellious attitude is just the opposite of the people of Nehemiah's day. Rather than continuing to uphold practices that were contrary to God's will, the people examined God's plan honestly and sought to do only what God desired. Read this account from Nehemiah 8:14-18: "And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should announce and proclaim in 'all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, 'Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written.' Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first

day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner" (NKJV).

The Jews learned that they had not been following God's Law in regard to the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:41-43). Instead of trying to justify their actions, they determined to observe the commands of God as they were revealed. What a wonderful example for us today! They recognized the authority of God's Word. They examined whether they had been obedient to its precepts, and they determined to change and follow God's Law rather than their own traditions. If people today would be willing to do the same, many practices that are continued on the basis of tradition would come to an end.

For example, if people honestly examined the Word of God, the use of instrumental music in worship to God would cease. God's Word states: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). Instrumental music should not be used to accompany our worship in song because God authorized man to sing (and make melody - Ephesians 5:19) with grace in the heart, not on the instrument.

If people honestly examined the Word of God, questions about whether baptism is essential would cease. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). No plainer statement is found in the Scriptures. In order to be saved, one must believe AND be baptized.

If people honestly examined the Word of God, the controversy surrounding divorce and remarriage would cease. Jesus said, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9). According to Christ, there is only one exception that makes divorce and remarriage acceptable - sexual immorality (i.e., fornication).

The Jews who lived in the day of Nehemiah were able to see that they had not been practicing what they read in God's message. If they had the ability to examine honestly the Word, people today have the same ability. Let us cast aside all preconceived ideas and traditions that are not supported by the Bible, and let us honestly examine His message as we seek to live by God's Word and His Word alone.

✠



## OUR PLEA 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 the one church of the Bible 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 believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and 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).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, 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 which contain doctrines and commandments of 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).

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