

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

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

*“He Who Believes In Me, The Works That  
I Do He Will Do Also:  
And Greater Works Than These He Will Do,  
Because I Go To My Father”*

SOME TODAY THINK they can, through their prayers “in the name of Jesus” heal the sick, because Christ had promised to His disciples, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” (John 14:12). But didn’t Christ also cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, fed several thousand people with a handful of food, and did many other wonderful supernatural works, like turning water into wine, walking on the river, etc. ? So if today one can heal the sick miraculously, then he should be able to do those other things also! If not. Why not? Are there no lepers to be cleansed? Are there no dead to be raised? Are there no hungry people to be fed? In Mark 4:35-41 we read about the great windstorm that arose while Christ and His disciples were in a boat sailing. It reads, “and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.....And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”” Can

someone do this today, rebuke the storm to be ceased, and call the sea to become calm??

In another passage of the New Testament, in Mark 16:14-20, we read that when Jesus was going back to heaven after His resurrection, in His last meeting on earth with the disciples, first of all it says, "He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen." (Remember, those were His disciples who had been with him for almost three years and had witnessed daily His many great and mighty works). Next we read, "And He said to them, "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."" Continuing, in speaking to them, the unbelieving disciples, Christ said, "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." So that after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. **And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.**" The signs or the miraculous works done in the first century by the disciples were to confirm the word they were preaching. They didn't have the Bible then to preach from as we have today. Notice, Christ did not make this promise to all who would believe in Him later by hearing their preaching, but to the "unbelieving" disciples, whom He had first sent to preach the gospel, and as they went out and preached everywhere the Lord was working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Observe too, besides healing the sick, Christ said that those who would believe in Him will speak with new tongues, that is, they will be able to speak in new languages they had never learned to speak; they will take up serpents and if they drink any deadly poison, it will by no means hurt them. **Now which preacher today does not need a translator if he is speaking to an audience where there are people who do not understand his language?** Yet when the disciples of Christ in the first century, to whom the Christ had made the promise, were preaching, the response of the listeners was: "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear each in our own language in which we were born?" (Acts 2:7,8). The disciples of Christ, the

apostles, spoke local Galilean language; but they who had come together there in the audience were from different nationalities, at least from seventeen different nations. But they were all amazed and marveled when they heard the Galilean preached to them in their own languages! Today no one can speak a language he has never learned. A few preachers in the past have even died foolishly as they tried to handle or take up poisonous snakes or tried to drink poison to prove the promise of Christ. The question is: if there are those today who claim to heal people of their various diseases, as they did in the first century, then why can't they do other things also, like raising the dead, speaking in unlearned languages, feeding multitudes of hungry people with a little food in hand, etc., which they did then?

Moreover, when Jesus had made the promise with the disciples, He had told them, "The works that I do he will do also, and **greater works than these** he will do, because I go to My Father." Can a person today go to a cemetery and raise one who has been dead and buried for more than four days? Didn't Christ raise Lazarus from the dead who had been dead and buried for four days? (John 11:38-44). In fact, he ought to be able to raise more than one because Christ had said, "greater works than these he will do!" What then did Christ mean when He had said, "Greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father?" What are the greater works? Greater works are the spiritual works which concerns the soul of man. Greater works would relate to wider opportunities which the disciples would have when Christ returned to the Father in heaven. It would then be possible for Christ to work through His people to save souls of men. Greater works wrought by the apostles of Jesus did not take place in spite of Christ's going to the Father but **because He did go to the Father**. For instance, after Christ's resurrection from the dead and going back to heaven, when His apostles had preached the first Gospel sermon to a large audience of the Jews on the day of their Pentecost, in answer to their question: "what shall we do?" the apostle Peter told 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 2:37,38). There were around three thousand people who were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins that day, and thereafter, as the gospel was being preached each day, more and more people were becoming believers in Christ and obeying the command of Christ to be saved from their sins. ((Mark 16:15,16).

The sole purpose of Jesus' coming into this world was to save souls from sins and make them worthy of heaven. (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 1:15). Sure, He did many miracles, including healing of diseases of all kinds, and also empowered His disciples in the first century to work all kinds of miracles, so that the word of God they were preaching would be confirmed by those accompanying signs and miracles. (Mark 16:20). How would the disciples believe in Christ that He was truly the Son of God? It was not possible by just hearing him preach to them. (John 14:7-11). How would the people of the first century believe in the preaching of the gospel of the apostles? The signs and miracles they were able to perform confirmed their word. Today we have the same **confirmed** word of God in the written form in the New Testament of the Bible, the perfect law of liberty. (John 20:30,31; James 1:25). In the absence of the completely written Bible they had to see to believe. We today have the complete will of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) in the Bible available to us. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Today we need to hear or study the Bible to believe in God and Christ and follow His will. We don't need to see a miracle to believe. Therefore, the Lord, according to His promise, allowed all miracles to be ceased and vanish away. (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

The superiority of the spiritual over the physical is evidenced by Jesus words of John 14:12. The greater works are the spiritual works (Matt.16:26), so far above the physical, and no works could be greater than that of the enabling act of redemption on the cross.

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## THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE

J.C. CHOATE

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE who still do not understand the purpose of repentance or even what repentance is all about. The scriptures have a lot to say about repentance and this is the best place to go to get the information we need on this subject.

Repentance has to do with a change of heart or mind, a change of life, and a change of state. It has to do with sin and that of turning away from sin, giving up sin, and not continuing in it. Christ told the story of a young man who was asked by his father to go work in his vineyard. The son said he would not but then later repented and

went (Matt. 21:28). Paul gives a good definition of repentance when he said, "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28). Actually, when one learns that he is in sin, that he is lost, believing in Jesus and willing to turn away from his sin to live a different life, now he is ready to acknowledge or confess with his mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of his sins that he might enter Christ and the church (Acts 2). This means that he has changed his mind about sin, that he wants to live a life without sin, and on his obedience to the Lord, he is forgiven of his sin and enters into a new state, that of being in Christ and his church. This is what repentance is all about.

One cannot possibly be saved from his sins unless he is willing to repent of them and obey God. Sin separates us from God. It brings death (Rom. 6:23). It is not a shame to admit sin, for we are all sinners, but the shame is when we are unwilling to admit our sin and to repent of it. Some act as though they have no sin or that they are too good to repent. Some think it would be disgraceful to acknowledge that they are sinners. Again, let it be understood that we are sinners whether we admit it or not. If we are wise we will recognize that the result of sin is death and it would be better to repent and live than to have so much pride and refuse to repent and to end up dying.

The Lord has never asked us to give up any good thing, only that which is bad and wrong. Even if we think we are living good moral lives, we still need to repent. In such a case we need to repent of depending on our own goodness to save us. The Lord died on the cross that we might be saved from our sins and we can be saved only when we turn to him in obedience.

What about after becoming a Christian? Is repentance ever needed then? Most certainly. Do you remember Simon the Sorcerer and how he tried to buy the power of God with money? Peter rebuked him for this and told him that he needed to repent. Simon asked Peter to pray for him and evidently was accepted again as a faithful child of God (Acts 8:20-22). The prodigal son in Luke 15 asked his father for his inheritance and then he went away and spent all of his goods in riotous living. He then was forced to feed pigs, and to even eat their food to survive. But the record says that he came to himself and said that he would repent and return to his father. He did so and was graciously received back. James says, "Confess

your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). The point is, even as children of God, we are still sinners. We may not be sinning purposefully or intentionally, but we are prone to make mistakes, to say things that we should not say and do things we should not do. We may leave things undone that we should have done, and so on. It is not that we want to do wrong, but in spite of everything, we may still commit sin. It is therefore in order always to pray for forgiveness. Do you remember that Christ taught the disciples to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12)?

But what about a person who purposefully or intentionally sins? He knows something is wrong but he does it anyway. Maybe he is tempted and gives in to the sin. Maybe he doesn't control his temper and says and does things that are bad and wrong. Of course it is always a dangerous thing to sin intentionally, but it is even more dangerous when one will not admit his sin and repent of it. Certainly, one must realize he is wrong, repent or turn from that sin, and ask the Lord, as well as the brethren, to forgive him if he is to be forgiven of his sins.

Sometimes members of the church in particular do not seem to realize that when they sin, and especially when it is of a public nature, that they must repent and confess their sins publicly to be forgiven. As already pointed out, it is always in order in any prayer to ask the Lord to forgive us of our sins, of course as we repent of them and try to be faithful to the Lord in all things.

We are not asked to repent of our sins to humiliate us but to rid ourselves of that which will destroy our souls. If we have some disease that can be cured by taking some medicine or by having an operation, would we not rather do that than to die physically? If that be true physically, how much the more should we want to do that which will make it possible for us to live spiritually. Let us then repent and live.

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## ***What Happened To Integrity?***

ROY BEASLEY

IT IS A WORD almost forgotten in the English language. We do not hear it used much anymore. It's meaning seems almost forgotten

to many of the younger generation. It is the word, “integrity.”

The dictionary defines integrity as: Steadfast adherence to a strict moral and ethical code. Synonyms include: character, honesty, truthfulness, principles. I saw on a church marquee: “Integrity: What a person does when no one is watching.”

Not much emphasis is placed on integrity now. It used to be emphasized more than it is now. Children were taught integrity. They were taught the value of having a good name. It used to be that many a business deal was made on a handshake—no contract, just a handshake. Such as that is unheard of now. We used to hear people say such things as “His word is his bond,” or he is “as honest as the day is long.” We don’t hear this said much of people anymore. We don’t often hear people praised for their integrity anymore.

We do not seem to expect honesty and truthfulness anymore. We do not demand integrity anymore. Employers do not expect it of their employees. Employees do not expect it of their employers. Teachers do not expect it of their students. We do not demand it of our elected officials. According to a recent poll the majority of the people confessed that they had lied before and that they would do it again if it offered them advantage.

In Jeremiah 5:1 God instructed the prophet to “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it.”

God said that he would pardon Jerusalem of their sins if Jeremiah could find just one man of integrity. Integrity had become so scarce in the days of Jeremiah that even one man could not be found in that whole city of Jerusalem that was honest or was truthful.

It was just as bad in the days of Ezekiel for he wrote this message from God, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but found none.” (Ezekiel 22:30.)

Isaac failed the integrity test. There was a famine in the land and he moved into the territory of Abimelech the Philistine. Now Rebecca was very beautiful and he was afraid that someone may kill him for her. So, he lied. He instructed her to say that she was his sister. Now, a lie is anything we may do or say to deceive someone else. He sought to deceive Abimelech and the Philistines by telling an untruth. There was no justification for it. This lie was purely for selfish purpose. He disregarded the danger that he placed Rebecca into. He took no thought of the possible consequences it

might have had upon his family or upon his neighbors. He lied because of a lack of faith. He was afraid. That is one reason why people lie. It is because of fear. But, faith will overcome fear. If we trust God enough, there will be no cause to lie.

But, Isaac's deception was discovered. Abimelech was unhappy with Isaac. However, he continued to allow him to stay in the land. Abimelech is described as a man of integrity—not Isaac. Isn't that surprising? Isaac acted with integrity after this, but on this particular occasion he failed the test.

Our integrity, too, is tested. Every day of our lives it is tested. How well does it stand the test?

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## TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

MIKE BAKER

FROM THE LAST few verses of the sixth chapter of John, we find an account of Jesus as some of His disciples had decided to not follow him anymore. No doubt the words of Jesus had become unsettling to some of these and they were no longer willing to accept Him as their spiritual leader. When these disciples turned and left, Jesus turns to the twelve and says, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67.)

It must have been tempting in some ways. The opinions of some, popular or not, were turning against the Lord and, certainly some among the masses did not appreciate the methods or messages of Jesus.

As anyone would attest today, it becomes far easier to proclaim loyalty and support for someone or something that is popular and supported by others. Just look at a winning sports team with it's "I'll root for you when you get to the big game" friends, or the rolling bandwagon of a popular political candidate. Everyone loves a winner. It's so easy to follow the crowd in this case.

But then what happens when the sports team loses, or the political candidate hits a hurdle he can't jump over? How long will these stay and proclaim their loyalty? At least with these scenarios, the person would have various legitimate options.

For the sports team, there is always next season, and if eliminated before the championship, there is always time to cheer another team to the championship. For the political junkie, there



are always openings for workers as long as there are campaigns. For either, there is a legitimate choice.

But what choices did the apostles have when Jesus asked them if they also would be leaving? Could they go out and find another Messiah? Was there a competing teacher or rabbi that would command the winds and seas, raise the dead and heal the sick?

Peter's answer was both plain and practical. He said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John. 6:68-69.) Peter knew that the one he was following was the Messiah and there were no practical paths for him to choose instead of staying with his Lord!

Peter's insight into the fact that he had already made the right choice of whom to follow, should teach us a great lesson. He knew what he believed, and confirmed his confession to Christ in his answer. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that there was nothing else for him to choose.

There is only one Savior. There is only one Christ. If the path seemed difficult, if the way became dangerous, Peter knew that his trust was in the Son of the living God. What better assurance could Peter have asked for?

We may stumble along a dry dusty road in following Jesus. We may be lured from time to time as seemingly better paths come along. But what is the benefit of leaving the path of the Almighty? As David so boldly proclaimed in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

True faith and trust in God will cause a Christian to know that there is no viable alternative to following the Son of the living God. So when we find ourselves not following after the paths of God's Son, just to whom do we think we are going? Study God's word and will for you. Be faithful to it unto death. There is no other way.

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## *What Was The Early Church Like?*

KENNETH DAVIS

WHEN PAUL, PETER and the other apostles lived, what was the church like? As we look about us today we see that there are many different kinds of things happening in the churches. Some of them

remind us of the fact that people have gotten away from the teachings of the New Testament. There are names, traditions, items of worship and many other things that bear little resemblance to the things practiced in the days of the apostles.

Why is this important? For good reason. The early church was guided by the apostles, but the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was about to say farewell to his followers he told them, "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...." (John 16:13.) These words clearly indicate that what the apostles would do regarding the Lord's church would be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Since that is the case, should we not be very attentive to what was practiced in the church under the guidance of the apostles? Can we treat lightly, what they did? Proper reverence for God and his word would demand that we pay careful attention to what practices were carried out in the New Testament church.

We note, that in the beginning of the Lord's church founded on Pentecost, there was only one church. It was the spiritual body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22,23.) Many years ago many moved away from the concept that there is ONE church. Some even speak of it as being a good thing to have division. Yet Christ prayed for the unity of the believers. (John 17:21.) If Christ prayed for the unity of his followers, can anyone believe that he is pleased with so many divisions among those who claim to be Christians?

When Paul wrote to Titus, he instructed him to be a "pattern of good works." (Titus 2:7.) The word "pattern" here is significant. It suggests form and organization. It suggests boundaries for Christian action. Those boundaries are outlined in the New Testament. When the early Christians came together they met together on the "first day of the week" for the purpose of observing the Lord's Supper. (Acts 20:7.) There was also prayer. (Acts 2:42.) The congregation sang together without mechanical instruments. (Ephesians 5:19.) They gave of their means into a treasury (1 Corinthians 16:1,2) and there was the presentation of the Word of God with the "apostles' doctrine." (Acts 2:42.)

As may easily be seen, the worship of the church in the days of the apostles was very simple. There was a pattern to it and we know that pattern had the approval of God since the Holy Spirit directed the apostles. Shouldn't we also seek to follow the pattern shown to us in the New Testament? When we do, we will be accomplishing several things. First, we will be showing reverence

for God and what he has said. Second, we will be following a divinely approved pattern of worship and third, our consciences will be clear for we will be trying to live as close to God's instructions as we possibly can. There is merit in our following the pattern that Christ has given, for in following it we receive his approval.

## THE JUDGMENT

GEORGE L. ROGERS

WHEN THE QUESTION came to Daniel Webster, "What is the most serious thought you ever entertained?" The great statesman replied, "That I am a responsible being and must at last give an account to my Maker." Indeed a very thought provoking question as well as a solemn and serious answer.

Many questions have been raised about the judgment. Everybody who ever lived, or ever shall live, must appear before "the judgment seat of Christ." Paul the apostle says, "For we must all appear...." (2 Corinthians 5:10.) It is astounding that brilliant men have limited the judgment of Christ to only "All Christians," and not to "All Men." The New Testament of our Bible mentions one judgment. (See Matthew 12:36-42; Luke 10:14, etc.) Therefore, Paul, here (2 Corinthians 5:10) does not limit the judgment scene to Christians only. The notion of a succession of judgment days is nowhere found in the Scriptures. Every man shall be judged according to his deeds, whether good or bad. (2 Peter 2:9; Revelation 20:11-13.)

### **The Imperativeness Of It**

Our text (2 Corinthians 5:10) says, "For we must." That is each one of us. Some things in life are optional; however, others cannot be evaded. All must die (Hebrews 9:27), and it is imperative that all will be judged. All must be raised from the dead (John 5:28,29.), and all must meet the Lord in the judgment. Again, Paul, to the Roman Christians speaks of "the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds." (Romans 2:5,6.)

### **Universal In Scope**

"For all men must appear," says Paul. Each one of us. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me. and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:11-12.) The apostle further taught that God will "judge the world." (Acts 17:31.) So then all nations shall be

gathered before the Judge. (Matthew 25:31-32.)

One may ask, for what purpose do all gather from every nation? Paul says, "the righteous judgment of God." (Romans 2:5.) We are not to appear with disguise, but shall stand at the bar of Christ with true character according to our works. (Revelation 22:12.) For God shall bring every work into judgment. (Ecclesiastes 12:12.)

We hasten to add that "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7-9), but this promise is for the Christian that "walks in the light." Even ugly sins can be forgiven to those who continue "in Christ," striving to do the Lord's will day by day. Therefore, God will forgive Christians all unrighteousness when repented of and confessed according to the Word of the Lord.

Jesus will be the judge. He said, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John 5:22.) In Paul's final charge to Timothy he said that Christ, "shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:1-2.)

### **The Finality Of It**

The stern finality of the whole matter is this: (a) The Judge is supreme, (b) The decisions righteous and eternal, (c) All will hear the sentence. Thus it behooves us to be prepared. The prophet warned Israel. (Amos 4:12.) Jesus has warned all men. (Matthew 7:13,14; Titus 2:11-14.) Jesus is our Saviour. (Matthew 11:28-30.) We must respond in obedience to his invitation. The sinner must believe, repent and obey the Gospel. (John 8:24; Acts 3:19; Mark 16:16.) Our faith and obedience to His commands put us into the body of Christ. (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3,4.) In like manner, the Christian must continue "walking in the light of God's Word." (1 John 1:7-9.) "Be thou faithful unto death." (Revelation 2:10.) Remember, after that cometh the judgment.

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## *Why Do Men Not Understand The Bible Alike?*

LEON COLE

IT IS AN OLD QUESTION, but still important. "Why do men not understand the Bible alike?" Probably, no one knows all the reasons. There is one certainty; God is not to blame if men do not understand the Bible alike. The apostle Paul wrote, "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17.) This

is not an impossible command. It must be concluded that when men “understand” the Bible “differently” some, perhaps all, do not understand the Bible at all.

### **A Lack Of Study**

One reason for problems in “understanding” is a lack of study. Of all people, Christians should spend much time in Bible study. Timothy was told, “give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” (1 Timothy 4:13.) The blessed man of Psalm 1 has “his delight in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:2.)

Ignorance of the scriptures invariably leads to apostasy. Hosea lamented in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” As men depart from the truth and it is asked “Why?” they need to go no farther than this passage.

It is shocking to observe the lack of Bible knowledge in far too many of our Bible classes. That statement is not meant as an indictment of anyone. But I believe that I learned more Bible in the little card class conducted in a crowded cubicle than is being learned in many classes with all the colorful materials, even puppets and the latest gadgets.

### **Traditions Hinder**

Traditions also hinder people in their understanding of the Bible. At Matthew 15:2, Jesus was asked, “Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” No law had been broken, merely a tradition. But traditions can sometimes blind us to what God’s word says!

It is not unusual to hear brethren quote David Lipscomb, Foy Wallace, Guy N. Woods, Leo Boles or some other great man as if the matter is settled. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” (1 Peter 4:11.) “....Learn not to exceed what is written.” (1 Corinthians 4:6.) We appreciate the scholarly efforts of devout faithful men, but they must not be exalted above the scriptures or hinder our understanding of the Bible.

### **Prejudice Is Another Hindrance**

Prejudice, is another villain responsible for blinding our minds to the truth. Let us strive not to read the Bible through colored

glasses. We should take the time to “search the scriptures” and determine what is true and what is false. Remember, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105.)

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## ***THE GOSPEL***

T. PIERCE BROWN

I AM DISTURBED by the apparently increasing number of persons connected in some fashion with the Lord’s church who conceive of the gospel as merely being the good news that Christ died for us. From that, it is an easy step to the false assumption that there are no commands that must be obeyed. Closely related to that is the next false assumption that anyone who believes that good news is my brother, and I should be in fellowship with him , regardless of what false doctrine he believes and practices.

It is remarkable how one false doctrine, or even a perverted truth can give rise to a large number of false doctrines, any one of which may lead a person to be lost. Let us examine some of these concepts in the light of God’s revelation.

It is true that the core of the gospel is the good news that “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8.) Paul expresses it so beautifully in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how 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.” However, even without a further examination of what the Bible says about the gospel, it should be evident that the mere fact that Christ died for us cannot be the complete gospel.

If that needs clarification, perhaps this illustration will help. Suppose an attorney writes you a letter that says, “John Doe died last week and we are happy to inform you he left you some property and money in his will.” What would you do with that information? Surely almost anyone can understand that for that will to be of any value to you, you would need to find out the terms of the will and conform to them.

Likewise, in order for the gospel of Christ to be really good news, we need to know and do some things. If John Doe left you some money, you would need to know whether it was ten dollars or ten million dollars. With the gospel of Christ, we need to know what his

death, burial and resurrection accomplished. One does not need to know in detail every aspect of what is involved in the blessings, but it should be apparent that we will miss some of the blessings if we do not understand what they are and how to appropriate them. If John Doe leaves you his entire estate, including farms, factory and money, you do not need to know how many cows and chickens he has on each farm in order to enjoy some blessings. However, the extent to which you understand the nature of each gift will determine how much enjoyment you receive from them.

So, when Paul talks about the promise in Christ by the gospel (Ephesians 3:6), we need to understand what we can do about the promises of the gospel. As Peter put it in 2 Peter 1:4, there are exceeding great and precious promises in the gospel. In fact, Ephesians 3:20 indicates that he has for us things that are “exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.” Ephesians 3:8 calls them “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

The gospel not only has the facts to be believed, including the fact that Jesus died, was buried and was raised from the dead. It also has promises that may be enjoyed. However, even knowing the facts and understanding the promises would be of little value if the gospel did not also reveal unto us how to accept or appropriate these promises. A will may have some unconditional bequests, and some conditional ones. John Doe may give you ten million dollars provided you refrain from smoking. You may have to do nothing except sign a form saying, “I appreciate the gift John Doe left me.” If John Doe had left this statement in his will, “If you believe me and sign this form, you will receive ten million dollars. If you do not believe me, you will receive nothing,” it is hard to conceive of anyone who would assume they should receive the ten million dollars without signing the form. It is also hard to conceive of anyone who would take the position that if you signed the form you would be getting the inheritance because of your works, or that you had somehow earned it.

Yet there are millions who for some strange reason assume that when Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16) that one should expect to be saved without complying with the terms of the will. It is equally strange to hear them charge that if a person accepts the gracious offer of salvation on the terms by which it is offered, it ceases to be salvation by grace.

It should be evident to any thoughtful person that the gospel consists of facts to be believed, promises to be enjoyed, and

commands to be obeyed. It would be interesting to hear those who claim that the gospel is merely the story of Christ dying for us to try to give an exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 1:8, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Have you believed the gospel and obeyed the gospel?

## ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES

JERRI MANASCO

AN ALTERNATIVE IS "the choice between two or more exclusive possibilities." (The American Heritage Dictionary.) The word is also defined as "existing outside convention." The phrase "alternative lifestyle" is given as an example. What today is called "alternative lifestyle" lies outside the prescribed practice, general usage, or custom or right behavior. It is often willful and arrogant disregard of accepted values. In other words, it is sin when it is an alternative to what the Bible teaches!

### **Alternatives And Human Freedom**

Man has the liberty to choose, to select alternative behaviors. God grants him that privilege. Adam was told, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:16,17.) God did not impose on Adam but gave him a clear offer and a warning: freedom to eat but restriction in one particular. Adam chose the alternative lifestyle (Genesis 3) and death followed as God had said. The wrong alternative was chosen!

"Wrong" is not a relative but an absolute value in spiritual things. God defines right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness. Man repeatedly wants to "update" the definitions in order to allow more freedom to act. What he does not consider is that what he calls freedom to act becomes instead his excuse to rebel against God (see Genesis 11.)

God led Israel into the necessity of realizing the need of his word. (Deuteronomy 4:2.) Jesus reminds us that his word will be the standard of judgment in the last day. (John 12:48.) This allows for no alternatives equally valid. Humanism has robbed many of his generation of its sense of moral value! No longer are absolutes reviewed, but personal "truth" is substituted for absolute truth.



An objective value system is rejected by so many today, even by some whom you would think would have a more rational attitude toward truth and error. Moral integrity has been sacrificed on the altar of moral apathy in the name of the god of compromise. The result has been salved consciences rejoicing in “alternative lifestyles” rather than calling it plain old sin.

### **“Alternative Lifestyles” And The Bible**

Of course homosexuality is an “alternative lifestyle.” Even though it is clearly a perversion of God’s design for man and woman and reaps the bitterest of consequences (Romans 1:26-28), it is justified even by men of high station. Even though the Old and New Testaments condemn it, it is upheld as “alternative lifestyle.” Two things puzzle me about this: (1) if it is a normal lifestyle as claimed, then why do the gays constantly demand special-group status, and (2) how can it be an alternative lifestyle if it is strictly legitimate???

### **Alternatives**

In light of some of the “reasoning” used to justify homosexuality as an “alternative lifestyle,” allow me to suggest some other things:

Living together before marriage is an alternative lifestyle, because it certainly is not the generally accepted way of doing things. The scriptures call for a man to have his own wife and for a woman to have her own husband to prevent fornication. (1 Corinthians 7:1-5.) Biblically speaking, living together out of wedlock tends to mock the responsible relationship that accompanies legal commitment in wedlock. It is an alternative lifestyle but is a wrong lifestyle.

Adultery would be classified as an “alternative lifestyle,” for it certainly is not what one wants his or her spouse to be doing. Of course, some realize the inconsistency of condemning adultery and justifying homosexuality with the result that they are forced to say that adultery is really a healthy alternative to a bad marriage! The Bible still says it is sin. (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10; 2 Samuel 11,12; Hebrews 13:4; Galatians 5:19ff.) Adultery destroys trust, one of the basic elements for orderly society.

Gaining financial advantage through the violent crime is an alternative lifestyle. The right way to make money is to work for it. (Ephesians 4:28; Genesis 3:19.) There are some folks, though, who believe in the alternative lifestyle of stealing from others, even if murder has to be committed. (See Proverbs 1:10-19.) One may choose to fall in with such men, but it is still wrong to do so and it is the wrong alternative!

Before being so quick to condemn the thief, remember that anyone who thinks he can walk out of a store knowing he has received too much change “as long as no one notices” is guilty of stealing also. This breakdown in integrity has become a modern alternative lifestyle. It is sin no matter how we justify it.

### **Alternatives Are Available**

Alternatives are available. Joshua placed the responsibility on the shoulders of the people when he said, “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve....” (Joshua 24:15.) Moses admonished the people to judge that of two alternatives it would be to their advantage to “choose life....” (Deuteronomy 30:15-20.) Jesus offers alternatives and makes it a matter of absolutes rather than relatives. (Matthew 7:13,14.) Yes, we can choose the alternative lifestyle, but with the choice we must be willing to accept the consequences that go along with it.

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## ***IS THE CHURCH JESUS BUILT ON THE EARTH TODAY?***

ALLEN WEBSTER

WE ARE NOT INTERESTED in a church that is like the church Jesus built any more than we are interested in a Savior like the Son of God. He either is or He isn't; it either is or it isn't.

The worship of Cain and Abel was similar (both worshipped the same God, at the same time, in response to blessings), but Cain's was rejected, and Abel's was accepted (Genesis 4:4-5; Hebrews 11:4). Tares and wheat were close in appearance, but one was edible and desirable, and the other was poisonous and hated (Matthew 13:24-30).

We are interested in finding the same church Jesus promised Peter He would build (Matthew 16:18). On that occasion Peter did not say that Jesus was “like” the Son of God. He called Him “the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

Since it is not possible for any church to prove historically that it has existed from the time of the New Testament, is it even possible that the New Testament church still exists today? Yes, because it is not necessary to trace a line of succession back two thousand

years. That possibility is easily proved by considering three simple principles. Come, “let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18).

### **CONSIDER THE SEED PRINCIPLE**

If we wanted to grow Alabama tomatoes in Texas, would we need a row of tomatoes stretching across Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and into Texas? No, just take the seeds from Alabama to Texas, plant them, and they will grow.

The succession of the plant is in the seed, not in the row. One of God’s eternal laws is that a seed produces “after his kind” (Genesis 1:11-12). When we plant beans we reap beans, not watermelons or corn; when we plant a peach seed it can produce only a peach tree, nothing else. Paul used this fact to illustrate a spiritual lesson: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). All institutions on earth—from Chinese Communism to Dell computers, from pro football to the Army—are perpetuated by their “seeds” (doctrines). So are all religious organizations. Each has a body of doctrine that it plants as seed. What is planted (taught) determines what grows.

“The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). When it was planted in the first century it produced Christians (individually) and the church of Christ (collectively). Let’s apply the seed principle to today’s religious situation:

- Do we have the same seed today as what was planted in New Testament times? Yes, we have the Bible (1 Peter 1:22-25).
- Has the seed become inert? No, it is alive (1 Peter 1:22-25).
- Do we have the same soil? Yes, human hearts (Matthew 13:19-23). It grows the same thing that it did then— Christians (Acts 2:22-47; 11:26). What else could it produce?
- What church will the seed produce? The same one it produced then; the one Jesus died to purchase, over which He reigns, and which bears His name (Acts 20:28; Romans 16:16).

The perpetuation of the church is in the pattern, not in the history of following it. It is in the seed, not in a perennial crop. It makes no difference how long the gospel- seed may have been stored. If there had not been a church upon the earth after the New Testament order for a thousand years, so long as God’s Word still survived, then Christ’s church would sprout up when people read, understood, and obeyed the gospel.

### **CONSIDER THE CODEBOOK PRINCIPLE**

A game, government, or gadget can be reproduced if its

specifications are preserved in a book or computer. If there were no Monopoly board on earth, but a diagram of the board and rules of the game were discovered, it could be recreated in a short time. If the planet's last television finally ceased to flicker, a talented person could take a description of it and make another one.

The Bible is the standard for Christianity. Paul wrote, "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Philippians 3:16; cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17). It simply contains the "rules" of Christianity. It is the diagram of what a church is to look like. It is the textbook of the Christian religion. Thus, in any place a Bible is read, understood, believed, and obeyed, the church will come into existence. This will happen regardless of whether a church has ever existed there before, is in existence at the time anywhere else, or even if it has been extinct for a century.

### **CONSIDER THE RESTORATION PRINCIPLE**

Many people like to restore old automobiles or antebellum homes. They get the original plans and painstakingly restore the car or house as it was in the beginning. Such a restoration is occurring presently on Thomas Jefferson's summer home in Forest, Virginia. Those involved even test the soil to determine what kind of trees and bushes were originally planted near the house, so they can plant the same plants in the same places.

Isaac began a similar restoration project in the days of the patriarchs. The Bible records:

And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them (Genesis 26:18).

Similarly a spiritual restoration project has been done with Christ's church. Christ set the water of life flowing from the wellspring of His church. Over the centuries, it slowly became stopped up by man's teachings. Then man became thirsty and longed for the satisfying water of the original well. Restorers consulted the original blueprint within the pages of the New Testament and began to dig again the original doctrines. One by one they identified first century practices and called them by their original names (1 Peter 4:11). Careful workers eventually restored the church just as it was then—the same plan of salvation, organization, acts of worship, love and zeal, and moral teachings. "Come and see" (John 1:39).

# *“I Glorified Thee On The Earth”*

CLEM THURMAN

JESUS, PRAYING TO THE Father just before His betrayal and arrest, said, *“I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do”* (John 17:4). By contrast, when the apostle Paul listed the sins of the Gentiles, he first showed, *“Knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks”* (Rom. 1:21). Jesus knew what was expected of Him, and He did it. The Gentiles also had knowledge of God, but refused to glorify Him: *“Their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things...Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them and practice them”* (Rom. 1:22-23,32).

The sins that make one *“worthy of death”* bring one under the just wrath of God. The apostle John tells us, *“This is the second death, even the lake of fire”* (Rev. 20:14). Surely, then, we do not want to suffer that death which results from sin: *“The wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23). Those Gentiles were doomed to spiritual death, eternal separation from God in the lake of fire, for not glorifying God. Jesus, on the other hand, did glorify God. He is our pattern.

## **JESUS GLORIFIED GOD BY HIS LIFE**

Jesus constantly showed His purpose in coming to the earth: *“I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me”* (John 6:38). When His disciples talked about food with Him, Jesus replied, *“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work”* (John 4:34). When He came to the close of His life, Jesus prayed, *“Father, not my will, but thine, be done”* (Luke 22:42). He could pray that because He lived it. He came from heaven, where He was *“on equality with God,”* and took the form of man in order die for our sins (Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14-15). Everything He did, His entire life, was then pointed toward to Calvary - to fulfill the purpose for which the Father had sent Him to this world. He lived in perfect obedience, *“Tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15), setting an example for us (1 Pet. 2:21). But His primary purpose was to offer Himself on the

cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He kept that purpose in mind, and glorified God by fulfilling it.

God has a purpose for our lives, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccle. 12:13). If Jesus glorified God by accomplishing the work God gave Him, then most assuredly we glorify God when we fulfill the purpose God designed for us. *"He died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again"* (2 Cor. 5:15). If we fail to live for Him, then we become like those whom Paul condemned in Rom. 1:21. If an automobile malfunctions, it hardly is a credit to its manufacturer. On the other hand, if it does what it is designed to do, an automobile reflects glory and credit to the ones who made it. That is precisely the way it is with us. When we fulfill the purpose for which God created us, we bring glory and honor to Him.

### **WE GLORIFY GOD BY OUR OBEDIENCE**

Just as Jesus glorified God by doing His will, so do we. The Lord said, *"Ye are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:14-16). Not only will our obedient lives glorify God, but such lives will cause others to glorify God, also. We are to be *"children of obedience"* (1 Pet. 1:14), as we follow in the steps of Jesus. The Scriptures say of Him, *"Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation"* (Heb. 5:8-9). Just as we are *"made free from sin"* by obedience (Rom. 6:18), so the Bible says, *"Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth"* (1 Pet. 1:22). There is just no substitute for doing what God tells us. We cannot glorify God while ignoring what he wants us to do!

The so-called golden text of the Bible states, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). Paul writes later, *"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). That love demands a response from us: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"* (Mark 12:30). Our lives should reflect God's love, as we seek to glorify Him. In fact, the life that glorifies God is based on, *"Faith working through love"* (Gal. 5:6). The Lord chose apostles to preach

His gospel to the world, and they wrote many letters to help us know God and our duty to Him. But Paul wrote, *“Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men, being manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ”* (2 Cor. 3:2). Others are watching us, “reading” the way we speak and act. Many times Christians are the only “Bible” an unbelieving world will read. When we live as God directs, we convince the world and bring glory to God.

### **WE GLORIFY GOD IN THE NAME WE WEAR**

*“If any man suffer as Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name”* (1 Pet. 4:16). The apostles, beaten and threatened with worse if they continued to preach Christ, rejoiced that they were *“counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name”* (Acts 5:41). Some 700 years before Christ, the prophet wrote, *“I will give to those within my house and within my walls, a name better than of sons and daughters... The nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name... Ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and shall call his servants by another name”* (Isa. 56:5; 62:2; 65:15). In Acts 10 we read of the conversion of the first Gentiles, then in Acts 11, *“The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch”* (v. 26). As the prophet had foretold, the *“mouth of the Lord”* gave this name.

God made a promise to Abraham, renewed to Isaac and then to Jacob. When Jacob wrestled with the angel of God, his name was changed to *“Israel”* (Gen. 32:24-28). *“Isra”* in Hebrew means “Prince.” *“El”* in Hebrew means “God.” Hence, Israel means “Prince of God.” Jacob’s descendants became a great people, a great nation, and were chosen by God to be His special people. But they were never known as “Jacobites.” They were *“Israelites.”* As God said, *“And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Jehovah; and they shall be afraid of thee”* (Deut. 28:10). They wore a name that identified them as God’s people, and in that name they glorified God. Under the New Testament, also, God has given a name for His people to wear: *“Christian...let him glorify God in this name”* (1 Pet. 4:16).

### **WE GLORIFY GOD IN THE CHURCH**

We live in a time when it is popular to belittle the value of the church. But read the Scripture: *“Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever and ever”* (Eph.

3:21). I will readily agree that we cannot glorify God in a denomination, but we can and must glorify God in the church we read about in the Bible. If Christians are to glorify God *"in the church and in Christ Jesus,"* would you not take it to be the church of Jesus Christ? He promised, *"I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:18). Notice that Jesus called it, *"My church."* It is not my church, it is not Martin Luther's church, it is not John the Baptist's church. It is the church of Christ. He is builder and head of His church.

Not only did Christ build the church, He bought it. To the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul said, *"Feed the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). The Lord Jesus is the only Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). But what happens when He saves people? *"They that received his word were baptized, and there were added to them in that day about three thousand souls... The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved"* (Acts 2:41,47). The same Lord who saved those people added them to His church. He never added them to a denomination, but to the church which He built and bought and in which we are to glorify God. When people became Christians, they also became members of the church which Jesus built. It is as Christians, in that church, that we glorify God. What a shame that so many try to glorify God, while they reject the church in which God wants them.

As Jesus prayed, *"I have glorified thee"* (John 17:4), He continued, *"Now glorify thou me with thine own self, which glory I had with thee before the world was"* (John 17:5). Again He said, *"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him"* (John 13:31). Jesus was crowned with glory and honor when he was received into heaven and sat down on the right hand of the Father (Phil. 2:9; Heb. 2:9). Just as Jesus was glorified, so shall we be, if we love and serve God in this life. *"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God... And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him"* (Rom. 8:14,17).

Let us learn to live in such a way that when this life comes to a close, we may be able to say with Jesus, *"I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self"* (John 17:4-5).

