

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

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

*When And How Is One Saved*

CONTRARY TO THE TEACHINGS and opinions of men that one is saved at the very moment one believes in Christ or when one prays the sinner's prayer, the Bible very clearly teaches that to be saved in Christ one must hear His gospel message and believe it, and repent of sins, confess Christ to be the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. This does not mean, however, that this is all one has to do to be saved and to go to heaven, but each and every one must follow these initial steps to begin the Christian walk. When Christ was going back to heaven, He had charged His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:15-16). Christ didn't stop at "He who believes," but said "He who believes **and is baptized** will be saved." Preachers who offer salvation by "faith only" are therefore deceiving people (Romans 16:17-18). Then there are those who are insisting on having a supernatural experience to be saved or to be "born again," an idea most irrational and unbiblical. This concept, variously advocated supposes that "at some particular moment," "with emotions better felt than told," in answer to prayer, "under the emotional appeal of revivalism" or in some other bizarre circumstance the sinner suddenly, "experiences faith." And at that moment all his sins are forgiven; he is transformed spiritually, born



again and saved eternally. Some claim to have such an experience during their sleep, when they suddenly see the sky opened up and hear someone speaking to them to assure them that they are now saved. This is totally absurd. No biblical precept or example even hints at such a thing ever. In all of the cases of conversions as mentioned in the book of Acts of the apostles no one ever came into Christ or became a Christian in the manner of such a false conception. On the other hand, no experience that any man ever had could rival that of Saul (Paul) on the Damascus road. He actually saw the Lord. But three days later he was still a praying penitent and grieving sinner, and so he remained till he heeded the command of the Lord given to him through Ananias to "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins." (Acts 22:16). The fact of the matter is that one must both believe and obey to be saved. Not just believe. (James 2:24, 26).

There are many other examples found in the New Testament book of the Acts of the apostles which shows that in all cases where people were saved and became Christians, all had to believe and obey the gospel. For instance, when a large gathering of people, after hearing the gospel of Christ, had asked the disciples, "What shall we do?" The answer given to them was: "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). When the Evangelist Phillip had entered the city of Samaria and preached **Christ** there, we read at Acts 8:12: "both men and women were baptized." A little later, in the same chapter of the book of Acts we read about the conversion of Eunuch. There we read, beginning with verse number 35, Phillip preached Christ to eunuch as they were traveling in his chariot, and, "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Phillip said, "if you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:35-38). Clearly one can see from all of these examples of conversion that there is a scriptural pattern given in the Bible to learn, when and how is one saved. One is baptized, immersed in water, to be saved; for the forgiveness of sins; to have sins washed away. During baptism one shares in the death of Christ, thereby contacting the saving blood of Christ which He shed in His death for the sinners. So does the Scripture teach: "Or do you not know

that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4). Also by being baptized one is placed in or enter the body of Christ, His church. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:47).

## ***HOW URGENT IS BAPTISM?***

J.C. CHOATE



*WHEN ONE IS DROWNING, there is no time to lose. When one is sick and near death, the need for the right medicine is critical. When one is facing a very important University examination, preparation must be made now, not next week. There are many examples of urgency when one must act now while there is time to seize the moment that makes the difference between success and failure, life and death, winning or losing.*

As important as all of this may be, it pales into insignificance in comparison to spiritual matters. If one is lost in sin, learning the truth and obeying the Lord in order to be saved is a life and death matter. One can wait, and even be complacent about it, but he can wait too long. Regardless of one's age, there is no promise of tomorrow. Bible says that now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

In most churches, baptism is considered to be unimportant and is minimized to the point that the candidates for baptism often have to wait for weeks or even months before they are “baptized”. Of course, according to their thinking it doesn't really matter how long they wait because they do not believe that baptism has anything to do with their salvation. For them it has become only a seal of approval from their church that they are now officially recognized as members of that church.

We also see in the church, sad to say, that there are some who encourage those who want to obey the Lord to wait until the following Sunday to be baptized, for their own convenience. Sometimes in the mission field the local preachers will “save up” those who want to be baptized until the foreigner comes so that he can have the

honor of baptizing them. This is a practice that should be discouraged, and those who are responsible for such should be taught, or rebuked and shamed, according to the situation. By doing this they are not only going against the examples found in the Scriptures but they are risking the loss of precious souls. A person could die before the foreigner can come to baptize him, or he might change his mind while waiting, or he might be misled by a false teacher who is opposed to the doctrine of the Bible on that subject.

When we turn to Acts 8 we read of Philip being directed to go out into the desert to meet a man on his way home to Ethiopia after having been in Jerusalem to worship according to the Law of Moses. As he rode along in his chariot, reading from the Scripture, Philip was directed by the angel of the Lord to go to him. The Ethiopian was reading from the book of Isaiah, so Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. The man answered, "How can I except some man shall guide me?" Then he invited Philip to come up into the chariot and he began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. As they went on their way they came to a certain water and the eunuch said, "see, here is water, what doth hinder me from being baptized?" Philip explained that he could if he believed with all of his heart that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. The eunuch said that he believed, and they stopped the chariot and both went down into the water and Philip baptized him and then they came up out of the water and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Now how long did they wait before Philip baptized the man from Ethiopia? Just long enough for him to confess Christ and to go down into the water. Why so quick? Because here was a man who had been taught what he should do to be saved and he was ready to comply with the Lord's will. Why wait any longer?

We also read in Acts 16 of the conversion of Lydia and her household and of the jailor and his household, and how that in both cases once they had been taught what they should do to be saved, they were ready to obey and they were baptized immediately. In case of the jailor, we are told that after Paul and Silas had taught him and his family the word of the Lord that they took them the same hour of the night and baptized them. But why the rush? Because they were lost, they had learned the truth, and they wanted to obey the Lord in order to be saved. There was no reason to delay their baptism and to delay their cleansing from sin.

In Acts 9 we read of the conversion of Saul. He was an unbeliever, a persecutor of the church, but the Lord appeared to him, convincing him that truly Jesus was the Lord, the Son of God. When Paul fell

on his face, asking what he should do, he was told to go into the city of Damascus and there it would be told him what he must do. Blind, praying, fasting, and ready for further instruction, Saul waited in Damascus. A Christian man by the name of Ananias was instructed by the Lord to go to Saul, being assured that Saul would be used mightily by God to spread His cause. When Ananias came to Saul and explained what God had said, he asked Saul, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Saul did so immediately, and the rest is history.

Not only did these different ones obey the Lord in baptism after learning the truth, but in every case of conversion in the book of Acts it is very evident that all of the people lost no time in being baptized as soon as they understood what they must do. Likewise, when one learns the truth today and wants to be saved, then baptism should follow as quickly as possible. There is no need for putting it off until Sunday or even until the next day. If one wants to be saved, and baptism is truly a part of one’s obedience to be saved—and it is—then there should be no delay in carrying out the Lord’s will. For sure, after one has completed his obedience to God, the Lord is not going to wait until some later date to save him, is he? And neither should we wait to do our part in order to be saved; and neither should we ask anyone who wants to be saved to wait until a later date to obey the Lord’s commands. It is most urgent that the penitent believer be baptized as quickly as possible, to have his sins washed away, so that he can be saved and be added to the Lord’s church.

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## ***DRINKING***

KOJO ACQUAH BEENYI

IN THE WORLD OF CHRISTIANITY, most people are doing things their own way. Only few still seek to do Bible things the Bible way and call Bible things by Bible names. Even some of those who are trying to do things the Bible way in religion, are doing their own thing in regard to the drinking of alcoholic beverages or drinks. This is very sad.

“Drinking of wine” (alcoholic drinks) to some is a controversial topic. I think it’s only a controversial topic when one does not seek to understand the plain Biblical teaching on drinking of alcoholic

drinks. Others say “the Bible does not say Thou Shalt Not Drink and that gives room for drinking whether one is a follower of God or not.”

Those who drink and have made it part of their life often say “even the Bible permits and allows drinking.” They say the Bible says (1) “Drink, but don’t be intoxicated” and also (2) “Drink, be intoxicated and even vomit!” (Only the misinformed and weak people will “quote that quotation”). Let’s see and examine these misquoted passages: (1) Haggai 1:2-7 “...Ye have sown much, and bring in little: ye eat, but ye have not enough: ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe, but there is none warm...” (v. 4, 5). There is nothing here that says “Drink, but don’t be intoxicated.” The people Haggai addressed were given to drinking, but were not intoxicated in order for them to stop drinking, thus spending their time in drinking. The Lord told them to “consider your ways”. So the main message in this quotation is “consider your ways on drinking” not drink and don’t be intoxicated. (2) Jeremiah 25:27 “Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I (God) will send among you.” Just last month, a man who is given to drinking cited part of this text (Drink, be intoxicated, and vomit) as a text from the Bible to justify his drinking. After reading the text with him, he said “then God is going to kill all of us who drink.” Yes, that’s exactly the message for alcoholic beverage drinkers.

Please read and consider the following passages which talk against drinking and describe drinks (alcoholic drinks). (1) Isaiah 5:11,12 (2) Isaiah 28:7 (3) Habakkuk 2:5. From reading these passages, we learn that wine and strong drink are troublesome: strong drink is said to “inflame” men, to turn their minds away from the work of Jehovah, to make them to err and be “out of the way,” to be “out of the way in vision”, to stumble in judgment. It is a “mockery”, deceiving or deluding men and causing them to lose self-control, (sad), to make mistaken judgments, and to behave in irresponsible ways.

With the idea that the Bible does not ban drinking, many Christians freely drink wine and defend it, some also afraid of being seen drinking, drink from what ‘they’ call bitters of no medicine other than just sticks. One brother, when confronted for drinking, said, “it is from bitters”, what a shame!

The Bible’s silence on Thou Shalt Not Drink does not give license for drinking. Our God knows better than we do. The drink can be used in many ways for good results. The Good Samaritan who found the wounded man beside the road “bound up his wounds, pouring

in oil and wine. . .and took care of him.” (Lk. 10:34). Paul also advised brother Timothy to “use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities”. Notice that Paul was with (Dr.) Luke (II Tim. 4:11) and he might have given that medical advice to Paul to be communicated to Timothy. Timothy used it, it wasn’t for APPETITE. Before the advent of modern medicine, doctors frequently used wine or strong drinks for a variety of ills, including its use as an opiate to deaden pain. The doctor’s prescription was not for the pleasure of drinking but for medicine. So drinks can be used medicinally but are not necessary for drinking.

Let’s talk of those who attempt to justify “moderate drinking” and talk against “drunkards”. Friend, anything which corrupts that which it touches must be, and is, always wrong; and men of God ought to avoid all participation therein. Actually, it is through so-called moderate drinking that most people become alcoholics. The unfortunate people were (1) at one time non-participants; (2) they then became moderate drinkers; and (3) from this graduated to being alcoholics. One can’t tell someone else to stop drinking while he himself is a “moderate drinker.” Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, wrote in Romans 14:21, “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother •tumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”

About fifteen years ago the chief of the surgical staff of one of America’s great hospitals said: “I have had ample opportunity to see hundreds and hundreds of people injured, crippled or killed as a result of accidents caused by drinking drivers. It is not the drunken driver but the drinking driver—the one with a glass or two bottles of beer under his belt who often takes chances that result in disaster.” So, drinking of any alcoholic beverage produces a form of drunkenness, and no drunkard “shall inherit the kingdom of heaven” (I Cor. 6:10). It is, therefore, but the exercise of good common sense to avoid the grave dangers associated with the drinking of intoxicating liquors by never swallowing one drop of it.

Many good people will miss their way to Heaven because they justify their drinking by saying, “the Bible does not say ‘Thou Shalt Not Drink’.” What we have discussed should tell you “Thou Shalt Not Drink.” Remember Strong Drink is to be given “unto him that is ready to perish” (Prov. 31:6). Friend, in closing, let’s take Solomon, who learnt a bitter lesson about drinking for enjoyment, “In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.” (NIV) (Prov. 23:32).

# ***Speaking In Tongues, Healing And Miracles: What the BIBLE Says***

WILLIAM KWESI NSOH

TODAY MUCH NOISE IS BEING MADE about speaking in tongues, healing, and miracles. We need to put much effort into studying to know the truth about the above subjects.

The Scripture called the Jews of Berea more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they did not only receive Apostle Paul's word with all readiness of mind but also searched the Scriptures daily to check if those things were so (Acts 17:11). In Gal. 1:8, Paul said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

What will be the end results if we try to deceive ourselves by pretending to speak in tongues, claim healing and power to perform miracles whereas the Bible teaches otherwise? We need to examine every work that we have done and return to the way of the Lord (Lam. 3:40). Let the Bible speak, and be silent where the Bible is silent

## **"BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT" EPH. 5:18**

Some do claim that before someone can communicate with God, that person must be filled with the Spirit to work miraculously. Let us examine use of the expression "filled with the Spirit" in the New Testament it occurs three times in the Gospel account, six times in the Acts, and only once in the Epistles.

In Eph. 5:1-5 we are told how the children of the light are to walk in the midst of the sons of disobedience. Verse 18 says, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5:18 does not connect being filled with the Holy Spirit with doing the work of signs, wonders and speaking with other languages.

Apostle Paul, speaking to the brethren in Colossians about "be filled with the Spirit," and it this way: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16).

In my research in the Old or New Testament, nowhere is it stated that being filled with the Spirit means that you can now do many works or wonders—except the three chapters of Acts where we find speaking in other languages (Acts 2:4,8,11; 10:46; 19:6). Each time in these, apostles were involved or present.



What God wants us to be filled with is the word, which will enable us to stand firm in this sinful world and also have assurance that one day we shall enter into the presence of God in heavenly places.

Nowadays, all believers have indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who teaches and directs our way to live a Christian life (Rom 8:9, 1 Cor 3:16). Let the Bible speak—that settles the whole matter—and be silent to what the Bible hasn't said.

### **SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

Much confusion arose in this generation concerning the topic of speaking in tongues. However, those so-called “tongues” are strange sounds rather than other languages that are impossible to speak without having studied or learned them.

In W. E. Vine's Greek dictionary, “Glossa” means language (noun), and “Heteroglosses” means strange tongues (adjective). For example, when the tongue is mentioned in the letter of James, the word “glossa” is used. It is also used for languages as well.

In the Old Testament prophecy, the only reference is by the prophet Isaiah, in 28:11-13, and that is cited in 1 Cor. 14:21. This does not have reference or connection with their speaking in other tongues God would speak to His people, Israel, through people with strange language. Their enemies who spoke would bring judgement upon them.

I can remember when I was a member of the Assemblies of God Church. I was told to be filled with the Spirit and speak with other languages. I could not do so, but I was forced to speak so that the words proceeding from my mouth were “KURE SABA TAYEA LURE YA MANATAWA SABA TANE, KURE YEA SABA TANA LURE.” It was later interpreted in this way: “Our God, He is alive, and He is with us. We need to open all our heart to Him that He can work miraculously in us. Amen” It was interpreted in this way by one of the leaders who claimed the Holy Spirit filled him to say it.

I could not really understand myself, but reading from James 1:26, it says, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.” If you speak in tongues and can't help it, then your tongue is not bridled and your religion is vain.

We have the evidence from the book of Acts that those who were present on Pentecost heard in their own languages. They were 17 tribes in all, but they all could hear in their mother language. In Acts 2:11 the foreign Jews said we hear them speaking in our own language the great things of God.

Apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 13, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels." Also, Rev. 5:9—and 10:11 similarly—says "Out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation."

The Holy Scripture tells me that it is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18) nor is He the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). We can see that the tongues speakers are making other lies to deceive themselves. It is blasphemy to even believe that such languages are the Holy Spirit speaking.

We should bear in mind that Satan does not only change himself into an angel of light but also mixes his works together with good carried on by the true believers in Christ (Matt 16:21-24, 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

The spiritualists have created many female and male mediums in their churches, where the female mediums seek to have authority over men in their assembly. The Bible says let the women learn to be silent in the assembly—only to be in submission (I Cor. 14:34-35, 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

Now without the laid hands of the apostles, we nowadays cannot have the power to speak in tongues because Apostle Paul says tongues will be stilled (I Cor. 13:8).

### **MIRACLES**

Before we can understand the word "miracles," let's look at the W.E. Vine Dictionary of Greek "Miracles" is from "dunamis"—power, inherent ability—and is used for work of a supernatural origin or character.

Since the creation of man, there have been miracles performed by God for man to see and glorify Him. This was so of the miracles that were performed by Moses, when God sent him to deliver the children of Israel from the hand of the Pharaoh into the promised land.

Before the gospel could reach the sinful generation, the people needed some evidence, such as miracles and signs, before they would believe (John 20:30-31). They were in Jesus' plan when he chose the 12 apostles to propagate the good news of the Kingdom and also work wonders. (Read Matthew 10). He further sent 72 to go and propagate the gospel to the lost world, but they came rejoicing and informed Christ that even demons responded to them. (Read Luke 10:1-8).

In Acts we can see that the apostles went on preaching the blessed gospel and worked miracles to confirm their message. Their mighty works are mentioned many times (Acts 2:43, 3:7, 5:5-10, 9:32-42, MK 16:20, Heb. 2:3-4). Also much is said about Paul (Acts 13:11, 14:10, 16:18, 19:12, 20:10, 28:3-6, 28:8-10). Others are

Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:8, 8:6-13). Thus, the book of Acts gives us a brief history of the miraculous work of the apostles.

Apart from I Corinthians 12-14, the miraculous power and gifts of healing given to some are seldom mentioned (I Cor. 12:28-31). The conditions at Corinth were so bad that they needed to be discussed. They were misusing the special gifts, and they were carnal-minded, had lawsuits against one another, a dreadful fornication in their midst, were drunk at the Lord's table, and had false doctrines. Those gifts are not mentioned in the other epistles—even in the epistle of Romans, which was written after the close of the book of Acts.

Our Lord Jesus Christ plainly warns us in the Gospel of Matthew 7:22-23 that “many will say to me (Jesus) in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? ... and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I (Jesus) profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Note carefully the saying of Christ Jesus.

### **HEALING**

In W.E. Vine's dictionary of Greek words, “*iaomai*” means to heal or of physical treatment in Matt. 15:28. In Matt 4:23, “Jesus went through Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.” My Lord Jesus Christ did not go about inviting or calling people to bring those who are sick, blind, or paralyzed. We can see that the spiritual healers do announce for the general public to come and see their wonderful works and receive healing.

And our emphasis should be upon the eternal, as in 2 Cor. 4:17-18 (NIV), “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far out weighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

Some faith healers may say that since Heb. 13:9 says “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,” He can still perform wonders. We do not question our Lord's ability. But God has manifested Himself in a different manner in each of the various periods of the history of mankind.

We have the full accounts of God's words in our hand, and we need to study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:16).

James 5:14-16 (NIV) says, “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make

the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

The healing in these verses is not made dependant upon the position of the elders nor upon the anointing oil, but rather upon the prayer of faith. It is fully evident that this is something quite different from what happens in many so-called faith healings. Moreover, we must bear in mind that James is a transitional epistle.

The devil also has power to perform healings, and people too do believe in him. The so-called Spiritual healers say that they can heal, but we can see that many people are suffering in hospitals, rehabilitation centres and on principal streets in cities and towns, whereby they cannot provide them with their healing power. I wonder if these spiritualists ever read what Apostle Paul says about them in Gal. 1:6-10.

Remember the word of Christ in Matt. 24:24: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

Again, the Lord has warned us in 2 Thess. 2:8-13: “And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

2 John 9 (NIV) says, “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

Considering these Scriptures, we cannot afford to believe in any doctrine merely because wonders are performed by its advocates. The Scripture lets us know in the strongest terms that Satan performs wonders to make people think that he is God.

The Bible tells us that “yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and **truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit and his worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in **truth**” (John 4:23-24 NIV).

# UNITY IN CHRIST

OWEN COSGROVE

THE SUBJECT OF RELIGIOUS UNITY should be of great interest to every person who considers himself a Christian. Unity is one of the great themes of the New Testament. The Lord Jesus taught its importance and fervently prayed for it. (Matthew 12:25; John 17:14-26)

## UNITY OR UNION?

Many in the modern world want religious “union” but not “unity.” If steel is glued to wood, there is union. But if steel is melted together with other steel, it represents unity.

The Pleas of many for union try to ignore the vast differences in religion caused by human dogma. They reject all petitions for unity declaring it impractical, impossible, and perhaps even undesirable.

The Bible forbids Christians to ally with false religions. (II John 8-11; Romans 16:17-18; II Corinthians 7:14-18) In Paul’s plea to the religious parties or factions at Corinth, he did not urge them to continue in their denominational beliefs ignoring their differences and justifying their division by a superficial show of union. Rather he commanded them to put away their denominational beliefs and, on the basis of God’s word to unite spiritually.

“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 division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (I Corinthians 1:10).

The churches of Christ plead for this unity that Paul enjoined. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. (Amos 3:3) Men propose union. God demands unity.

## BASES OF UNITY

The New Testament tells people HOW to be united in Christ. May it be recognized that God wants more than mere unity. People can be united in error and wrongdoing. The Lord wants all to be united in truth and righteousness.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4, the apostle Paul gives a marvelous and simple plan for unity in Christ. Along with various personal and spiritual qualities so important to peace and understanding, he mentions seven DOCTRINAL bases of Christian unity. These are the bare essentials of religious harmony. True

concord cannot be achieved without them. As men reject one or several of these bases of unity, they frustrate the plea for oneness in Christ.

Note carefully these seven items that Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:3-6:

**ONE BODY**—In this same epistle, chapter 1, verse 22 and 23, and in chapter 5, verse 23, Paul makes it very plain that the body to which he refers is the church of the Lord.

**ONE SPIRIT**—Paul speaks here of God's Spirit which helped in creating the world, which guided the writing of the Bible, and which dwells in Christians.

**ONE HOPE**—Our great hope in life is life eternal with God.

**ONE LORD**—This is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**ONE FAITH**—This is the system of belief revealed in the New Testament. (Jude 3)

**ONE BAPTISM**—The baptism commanded in Christ's Great Commission is a burial (Romans 6:3-5) in water (Acts 8:36; 10:47) for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:27-29).

**ONE GOD**—The only true and living God is Jehovah, the Creator of the universe, and the One who shall judge all men.

### **HOW MANY IS ONE?**

At this point, let it be stressed that "one" does not refer to 3 or 40 or 300. It is a specific number referring to "1"—no more and no less.

It is not difficult for most people to determine the meaning of this word in the expressions "one Spirit" "one hope," "one Lord," and "one God." If someone should attempt to teach that there are many Lords or many Gods, Christendom would arise in a storm of protest at such heresy.

But there are many today who deny vehemently that there is only one body, only one faith, or only one baptism. The most frequent criticism of the church of Christ is that it believes that there is one true church, that all people should accept the one faith of the New Testament, and that all people should submit to the one baptism commanded in Christ's Great Commission. (Matthew 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15-16). Churches of Christ do not believe these things just to be cranky or harsh. They believe them because the Bible so teaches.

### **LET US UNITE!**

We are not ashamed to exhort all men to be truly one in Christ. When men would deride and discourage this plea, we think of Christ in His agony in Gethsemane praying that all men might be one in Him.

The time is already short for attaining real unity in Christ. Those who cling to human opinion and doctrine are delaying the process. Those who speak in great platitudes and generalities about unity, but who hold to their divisive human names and creeds are impeding progress toward the unity for which Christ prayed.

Are you willing to do your part to obtain unity in Christ? If so, we urge you to worship the one God, to obey the one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to obey the one baptism, and thereby to be a member of the one body, living by the one faith, and pressing on toward the one great hope of life. (Galatians 3: 27-29).

One cannot believe or teach several kinds of baptisms or faiths or churches are acceptable to God, and still believe what Paul says in Ephesian 4.

God's plan for unity is plain and His command is explicit. Timidity urges one to admit, "Surely this is simple. Why doesn't everyone do it?" In humility we ask, "Why don't you?"

## What Is The Duration Of Hell?

BOB PRICHARD

IT IS COMMON IN TODAY'S RELIGIOUS world to reject the biblical teaching of the reality of hell. Many claim that the old "eternal hell fire" is out of character for a loving God, and that when this life is over the unsaved will simply cease to exist.

This is an appealing doctrine to many, because it eliminates the possibility of punishment for sin. However, Jesus said that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). Paul wrote that those who do not know God and refuse to obey Him, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Hell, the ultimate abode of the wicked, is translated from the Greek word *Gehenna*. It differs from *Hades*, another Greek word rendered as hell in the King James Version. *Hades* is the abode of all the dead, righteous and unrighteous, before the resurrection. The literal *Gehenna*, from which hell is derived, was a narrow gorge near Jerusalem that represented the worst of Jewish history. Years earlier they stained this valley with the blood of their own innocent children offered in sacrifice to the idol, Baal. In Christ's day, *Gehenna* was a continually burning garbage dump, the name of which He appropriated to describe the final abode of the wicked.

The Scriptures often describe hell as a place of unending punishment. Jesus spoke of the day when His angels would gather those who do iniquity and “cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:42). John described hell, saying, “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night” (Revelation 14:11).

Other passages describe hell as “outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12), a “furnace of fire” (Matthew 13:42), and “eternal fire” (Jude 7).

Jude said Sodom and Gomorrha, the wicked cities that were “giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). The term *eternal* literally means “always being.” Hell is just as eternal as heaven (Matthew 25:46). If the fires of hell burn out, then the light of heaven will go out on the same day. The good news is that hell can be avoided! Jesus died that we might be saved. We can all obey His gospel and dwell in heaven forever.

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## **THEY COULDN'T EVEN WRITE BACK THEN**

HOWELL FERGUSON

SOME HAVE ENJOYED MAKING FUN OF THE BIBLE. For example, Samuel Rolles Driver (an archaeologist, a linguist, an anthropologist, and somewhat of a paleontologist) picked up the Bible, read it, and ridiculed it, saying, “It is impossible that Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible.” Driver continued, “It is impossible that Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible because men didn’t even know how to write when the Pentateuch was written.”

Well, it looked bad for the Bible for a while, until over in northern Egypt they unearthed some clay tablets: the Tel El-Armana tablets. These tablets were letters from people in Palestine to people in Egypt that were written centuries before Moses ever lived. Not only did they know how to write, they even had a post office!

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# THEN THE END

VANCE HUTTON

SOLOMON SAID THAT THE END of a thing is better than the beginning. (Ecclesiastes 7:8). We rejoice at births and weep at deaths, but even that end can be better than the beginning. Paul said for him to die was gain (Philippians 1:21).

There is an end coming to the world just as surely as there was a beginning. Paul spoke of the end (1 Corinthians 15:24). as did Jesus (Matthew 10:22). Have you pondered what the end will be like? No one knows when it will be (Matthew 25:13), but we are told what will happen when it comes.

**JESUS WILL RETURN** (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11). Every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7) as He comes in glory to sit on His judgment throne (Matthew 25:31-33; cf. 2 Peter 3:10). His return will be with a great shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 5:1-3).

**THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED** (1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). An hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear the Lord's voice and be raised (John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:12-15).

**THE LIVING WILL BE CHANGED** (1 Corinthians 15:51). Those alive at the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) must have bodies transformed into incorruptible nature (cf. Philippians 3:21).

**THE EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED** (Matthew 24:35). The earth will be removed (Revelation 21:1), an event Peter connects to the Lord's return (2 Peter 3:10). The heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works therein burned up.

**THE JUDGMENT WILL TAKE PLACE** (Matthew 25:31-33). All will appear before Christ's judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10), small and great (Revelation 20:12). Every person will give account to Him (Romans 14:11-12).

**THE KINGDOM WILL BE DELIVERED UP TO THE FATHER.** Christ presently reigns over His kingdom, the church (Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:34-36). When the end comes Christ will usher the faithful of His kingdom into the very presence of God and heaven itself (1 Corinthians 15:24). Think of it!

**THE WICKED WILL BE SEPARATED** (Matthew 25:41, 46). This place of everlasting shame, contempt, smoke, pain, and torment will be forever.

My friend, what will be your fate when the end comes?

# ***KINGDOM OR CHURCH***

ALLEN WEBSTER

IT MAY SURPRISE YOU TO LEARN that the church of the Bible does not have a proper name. By definition *church* (*ekklesia*) means “the called out” and refers to those who have been called out of the world into fellowship with God, by faith and obedience to the gospel (Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

## **I. KINGDOM REFERS TO THE CHURCH’S FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

The church is pictured in different ways, according to which aspect one is considering. It is called a body when one is considering the unity of its members. It is called a vineyard when one considers it is the place where God’s servants work to grow the fruit of the Spirit. It is called a family when one considers its members’ relationship to the Father and each other. It is called an army when one recalls that it engages Satan’s forces in a to-the-death battle for the souls of men. When its government is considered it is called a kingdom because it is a monarchy (ruled by a monarch or king).

This should not be confusing: I am a man, a son, a husband, a father, a taxpayer, a fan, an employee, a writer, and a Christian. Likewise, the church is referred to by several designations in Scripture. Consider these descriptions:

- the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16).
- the church of the Lord (Acts 20:28 ASV).
- the church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2).
- the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).
- the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15).
- the church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:23).

## **II. THE TERMS ARE USED INTERCHANGEABLY**

*Church* and *kingdom* are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Jesus said, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19). Obviously, He is talking about the same

institution in back-to-back sentences, much like I might say, “You may borrow my van. Here are the keys to the Honda.”

Jesus promised to build His church and gave Peter the keys (terms of admission) of the kingdom. If the church and kingdom were different, Peter would have no right to use the keys of the kingdom on the church. It would be like using your Ford keys to try to drive my Honda.

If the kingdom has not yet been established, as many teach, then Peter lived the rest of his natural life and never got to use the keys at all. Why would Jesus give him useless keys? The kingdom or church was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On that day Peter used the keys of the kingdom to let three thousand people into the door of the church (Acts 2:38-47).

### **III. THE KINGDOM AND CHURCH HAVE THE SAME IDENTIFYING MARKS**

It is hard to miss that the institutions are the same when carefully reading the New Testament. Consider:

- The church and the kingdom have the same head. Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:23) and He is also the King of the kingdom (Acts 17:7; Revelation 1:5; 1 Timothy 6:15).
- They are entered into on the same conditions. Jesus said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Men are born into the kingdom by being baptized in water according to the Spirit’s gospel. On Pentecost the Spirit led sinners, through the apostles’ message, to believe, repent, and be baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). They were then added to the church (2:47). The same process by which a person entered the kingdom added him to the church.
- The kingdom and the church have the same subjects. Paul said that the saints had been translated into the kingdom (Colossians 1:13), which was also “the body, the church” (1:18).
- The church and the kingdom have the same seed. Jesus spoke of the word of God as being the “word of the kingdom” (Matthew 13:19) which produces subjects of the kingdom. When the same word was preached in Corinth (1 Corinthians

15:1-3), many of the Corinthians heard it, believed it, and were baptized (Acts 18:8). Paul addressed them as the “church of God” (1 Corinthians 1:2). If the church and the kingdom are not the same, then one seed was producing two different plants, which is a contradiction to both nature and revelation (Genesis 1:11; Galatians 6:7-8).

- They have the same laws. Peter wrote: “His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). If either the kingdom or the church had one thing that pertained to life or godliness which the other did not have, then the one lacking it would be imperfect, and Peter’s statement would not be true of both. Hence, they must have the same laws.

Someone designed a helpful chart comparing the identifying marks of the kingdom and the church, and in so doing, showed they are the same institution.

#### **IDENTIFYING MARKS—KINGDOM/CHURCH**

1. Beginning place/date	Isaiah 2:2-3/Acts 2:1-47
2. Boundary of territory	Daniel 2:44/Mark 16:15
3. Owner of institution	John 18:36/Matthew 16:18
4. Ruler of inhabitants	1 Timothy 6:15/Ephesians 5:23
5. Governing law	Isaiah 2:3/Acts 2:38-47
6. Christ gave keys	Matthew 16:19/Matthew 16:18
7. Terms of entrance	John 3:5/Acts 2:38-47
8. Membership	Colossians 1:13/Colossians 1:2
9. Its glory and exaltation	Isaiah 2:2-3/Ephesians 3:21
10. Memorial supper	Matthew 26:29/1 Corinthians 11:20
11. Reward of faithful	Matthew 25:34/1 Corinthians 15:58
12. Time of deliverance	1 Corinthians 15:24/ 1 Thessalonians 4:16

Since things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, it is easy to conclude that the kingdom and the church are the same institution.

Christ invites you to become a member of the greatest institution on earth (Matthew 11:28-30). Why not take Him up on it?

# YOU CAN BE JUST A CHRISTIAN!

YOU CAN BE JUST A CHRISTIAN! Does that sound strange? With hundreds of religious bodies each wearing different names it might appear to be impossible to be a Christian without being a part of a denomination. It is not only possible, but there are actually millions of “Christians only” in this world

## **The Churches of Christ**

Who are these people who seek to be Christians only? The church of which they are a part is usually known as the “church of Christ.” This term is not used in a sectarian sense, but is intended to denote their desire to belong to Christ’s church. The Bible says, “All the churches of Christ greet you” (Rom. 16:16). However, it is just as correct to describe the church of which we read in the Bible as “the church of God” (1 Cor. 1:2), “the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27), or “the household of God” (Gal. 6:10). These and similar Biblical phrases are not proper names, but descriptive expressions which show how the church is related to Christ and the Father.

Individually, in the Bible, Christ’s followers are known as “Christians.” “The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). “If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (1 Pet. 4:16). “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:28). Never does a human name prefix this God-given name. Paul was one of the greatest of all of God’s servants, but he did not want disciples to be called “Paulites” or “Paulite Christians” (1 Cor. 1:10-12). The Gospel only makes Christians only.

## **A Distinctive Plea**

Churches of Christ have a distinctive plea. We believe in the divine inspiration of the entire Bible and that it is sufficient to guide us in all matters of faith. We believe in the death of Jesus Christ and His atonement for our sins; and, we believe that after death all men will be rewarded or punished in another life for the way we have lived here. And with all people of religious conviction, we insist that the moral principles of Jesus are absolute truths to be exemplified in the personal righteousness of the child of God.

## **The Bible Only**

However, we not only believe that the scriptures are inspired,

but we also are convinced that the New Testament must be our only guide in religious faith. God's word frequently warns us against changing the divine message (Gal. 1:6-9). We, therefore, have no creed or catechism to present, but accept Christ as our only creed and the Bible as our only guidebook. In this way we are never prevented by an erroneous creed from accepting any truth which may be learned from God's word.

### **Restoration, Not Just Reformation**

It is obvious to thinking people that the religious world is badly divided. Great leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin sought to correct erroneous teachings and practices. But the reformers often started at different points and thus arrived at different conclusions. Division rather than unity has resulted.

Churches of Christ, on the other hand, plead for the restoration of apostolic Christianity rather than a reformation of existing religious bodies. Since all can agree that the early church was taught right by the apostles, we should also be able to agree that we cannot be wrong if we succeed in reproducing the church that resulted from that teaching in every essential part. While many things have changed in the Twentieth Century, the teaching of Jesus and His apostles has not changed. Truth is absolute and unchangeable. "God's word is truth" (John 17:17) and, if applied in the same way, can save today as surely as it did in the First Century. "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

When you visit church of Christ you will find it worshipping God as the early disciples did—"in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). You will observe that it partakes of the Lord's Supper, or communion, every Sunday. This is because we are following the example of early Christians who assembled every first day of the week "to break bread" (Acts 20:7). Likewise, in every other way the church of Christ seeks to reproduce New Testament Christianity—in organization, in work, in worship, and in other areas of teaching.

### **How to be a Christian?**

In few places is there so much disagreement as in answering the Bible question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Here, again, churches of Christ reply by going to the scriptures for their answer. The Bible teaches that Christ shed his blood for the remission of our sins (Matt. 26:28), and that without it we cannot be saved (Heb. 9:22). But, what does Jesus require of us if we are to appropriate that sacrifice? Those who crucified Him were told to

“know assuredly” or “believe without a doubt” that Jesus is “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). When the people on the day of Pentecost asked for further information on what they should do, they were told, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Today, we teach as the apostles did—in order for Christ’s blood to remove our sins we must believe in Him, repent of our sins and be baptized. When we are thus saved from our sins, the Lord adds us to His body, the church. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). “For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). The saved, then, are in the body, or church of Christ. One cannot be saved and be outside His body.

The early Christians were Christians only. Although we live more than 2,000 years later, we can also be Christians only if we will follow the same teaching that was given to the first followers of Christ. Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Just as surely as a planted acorn will produce only an oak, so God’s word will produce only Christians. It will produce nothing more and nothing else. We invite your earnest consideration of this plea.

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## THE TIE THAT BINDS

MAXIE B. BOREN

THE TIE THAT BINDS CHRISTIAN hearts together is the most wonderful thing in this world! The comradery of kindred spirits so closely bound together by like-precious faith is indescribable. Sweet fellowship in Jesus Christ—praise and thanksgiving to God for it!

The Bible teaches that Christians have been called “*into the fellowship of God’s dear Son!*” (read 1 Corinthians 1:9). When we are in fellowship with Him who is our Savior, we are in like manner in fellowship with the Father. And this fellowship extends to our fellow human beings who are also in Christ...who have been translated from darkness into the kingdom of light. Consider 1 John 1:1-7, Colossians 1:13, Ephesians 1:3, etc.

Almighty God designed and purposed this “tie that binds” to be a “little bit of heaven on earth!” And it is just that! As hearts and minds are blended together in Christian love and service, the joy

forthcoming defies words to adequately describe! It is a marvelous thing to experience!

But my heart aches for those who do not know this joy—the **vast majority** of the world's population are floundering in sin and spiritual misery. How terribly sad! These have never known the way of righteousness...they are still walking in darkness. But even sadder, if such is possible, is to think of those who have known the Way and have left it...choosing to go back into darkness and forfeit the precious "tie that binds." This tears at my heart, to think of friends and loved ones who have done this very thing. It pains me ever so deeply because I know what they are missing!

So to those who might read this little article who have drifted away—I plead with you—**come back Home—come back to Jesus Christ and His church—come back and know the preciousness of "the tie that binds" together the hearts of God's people.** Please read Luke 15:11-32.

**Form IV**  
(See Rule 3)

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I Sunny David, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Sunny David