

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## Editorial

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

*Faith By Itself, If It Does Not  
Have Works, Is Dead*

THERE IS AN INTRIGUING STORY about a woman who was healed of her infirmity, that was almost incurable, by faith in Christ. The record says, "And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour." (Matthew 9:20-22).



The woman was healed by faith; but it was not faith only. She had heard of the fame of Jesus, no doubt, and believed He could heal her. But she was not healed that very moment she had believed. When she had believed in her heart and said, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." Did she then have faith in Him to be healed? She certainly did. But was she healed at that very moment she had believed? No. Certainly not. She was made well when she did touch the hem of the garment of Jesus by faith. She had understood that she would have to first touch the garment of Jesus and then she would be made well. She had great faith in Jesus as she was pushing her way through the crowd, but she was not yet healed. She was healed, after she had by faith touched the hem of the garment of Jesus. She was healed by faith which

expressed and demonstrated itself through action. Her faith acted before it brought her the blessing. Galatians 5:6 says, "It is faith which works that avails." James wrote, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." He goes on to say in verse 26 of the same chapter, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

In Hebrews chapter 11 we have a long list of the names of those made famous by faith, but in each case their faith was expressed by action before the blessing was received. For example, Noah was saved from the old sinful world by faith; but he first had to build an ark as was directed (Heb. 11:7). The woman of our text had faith, but not a dead faith, she had a working faith, a faith that demonstrated itself in action.

When Christ had returned back to heaven, after giving the great commission to His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16), a very large crowd, after hearing the gospel of Jesus, and believing in Him, had asked the disciples, "What shall we do?" The answer given to them was: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37,38). This is very much unlike preachers tell people today to do to be saved. However, the question is, did they do that? Or said, "no, we'll be baptized later, because since we have believed in Jesus and have "accepted Him our personal Savior" we know we are saved now." Friends, the record in Acts 2:41 says, "Then those who gladly received his words were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." **There is a poisonous vagary floating like a miasma amongst a large number of believers in Christ that salvation from sin through Christ comes by faith only** and there is no need to be baptized. Baptism, they believe, is just an outward sign of salvation that has already occurred inside the person at the moment he/she believed in Jesus. But what did Christ say? Listen to Him, He said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16). The apostle, at Galatians 3:27, wrote, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Is salvation out of Christ or in Christ? Who has put on Christ? According to the apostle of Christ, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. What if the woman of our text had just believed that she would be healed since she believes in the power of Christ to heal her? Would that faith have healed her? To be made well she had to touch the hem of the garment of Jesus by faith. She had to demonstrate her faith. Did Jesus know, before she had touched His garment that she believed

in Him? Did He make her well at that very moment she had believed? When was she made well? The Bible says, when she had touched the hem of the garment of Jesus, “Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?”” Again, did the power to heal come out of the clothes of Jesus? No. The healing power had come out of Jesus, as He said, not out of His garment. But not until she had touched His garment. The power was not in the garment, but it was in Christ. But to be blessed by the power of Jesus she had to touch His cloth. Friends, there is power in the things of Lord Jesus. But those things must be touched and contacted to receive His blessings. Jesus Christ is not with us today on earth personally, but when we do His commandments by faith, we come in contact with those things which belong to Him, such as, His gospel (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4); His church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28); and His baptism (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-5).

The apostle Peter in his first epistle, reminding about those who had perished in the time of Noah by the great flood, wrote, “who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—**baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:20-21). It was actual filth that was washed away by the flood, it is moral and spiritual filth which are washed away in baptism. The former affected the flesh and not the conscience, the latter affects the conscience but not the flesh. No person, as long as he/she has not obeyed the divine commandment to be baptized, can ever have a good conscience as long as one remains without being baptized into Christ to wash away one’s sins. (Acts 22:16).

## WHY IS SO MUCH SAID ABOUT THE CHURCH?

J.C. CHOATE

SO MUCH HAS BEEN SAID about the church that many people have become very negative when the subject is brought up. It is said that in



Japan many express an interest in Jesus but not in the church. There was a recent segment on *The Voice of America* (VOA) where “*Christian Rock*” was discussed and one of the comments was that the young people want to know about Christ but are turned off when it comes to the subject of the church. Why is this? Do they not see the relationship between Christ and His church? Are they not aware of the fact that it was Christ who built the church, died for it, is Saviour of it, and will come back for it one day to deliver up to God?

In the first place, in the religious world as we know it, most have gotten far away from the concept of the church as the Bible identifies it. They see the church as nothing but a group of denominations with all kinds of names, doctrines, worships, and practices. This leads to competition and tension between these groups. Then to off-set this appearance of competition, preachers tell people that the church isn't important anyway, that one can go to heaven without even being a member of any church. With this kind of message being constantly sent out, is it any wonder that the majority are tired of hearing about such a divisive, irrelevant subject?

But what does the Bible say about the church? Does it seem to be an irrelevant subject there? Do we read little about it there? In the Bible, is the church dismissed as an unnecessary thing?

Listen! When you go to the Scriptures themselves you will be surprised to see that the church is actually a central theme of its entire message. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies about its coming (Isaiah 2:2,3; Joel 2:28,29; Daniel 2:44). The church, and characteristics of its members, were the themes of almost all of Christ's lessons (Matthew 6:9-13; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 18:17). He made prophecies concerning its coming into the world (Mark 9:1; Matthew 16:18,19). He spoke many parables about the church, the kingdom of heaven, to help us understand its work (Matthew 12,13 and 25).

Going on to the book of Acts we have the beginning of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2) and all of the preaching and teaching and missionary journeys that tells of the conversions, the persecutions of it and its expansion throughout the world. Reading from the book of Romans through Jude, you have all of the letters that were written to different individuals and congregations of the church, and all of the information pertaining to its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), its purchase price (Acts 20:28), its name (Romans 16:16), and its Saviour (Ephesians 5:23), its headship (Colossians 1:18), its oneness (Ephesians 4:1-6), and its future—that Christ will come

back for it one day to deliver it up to God (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Then finally the book of Revelation tells of the trials and tribulations of the church as a body, of its individual members, and of its final victory. As a matter of fact, if you remove from the Scriptures all that is said about the kingdom or the church (they are two words for the same body of people), you would not have much left! Isn't the Biblical perspective about the church shocking when compared to the unimportance placed on it, even in the so-called religious world?

But why does the Bible say so much about the church? Because it was a new subject, a vitally important subject, and the world didn't know anything about it. Christ had come to call together a body of people who would follow Him, and He would die to save the group, so He wanted everyone to know all about what He was doing. In order for man to understand, he had to be taught all these important truths about the church—who would bring it into existence, where it would first begin, when people would first be able to become a member of it, how it would worship God, how it would be organized, its work as His representative in the world, and the necessity of all people to come out of the world and to be born into this wonderful, saved spiritual family of God. That is why so much had to be said about the church in the first century—so much had to be learned!

But why must so much be said about the church today? Doesn't the Bible tell us all we know about the church? That's the point; all that is said in the Scriptures was written for our learning, that we might know God's will concerning the church, His grace and our obedience, and everything necessary for us to be forgiven in this world and saved eternally in the world to come (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:3; Hebrews 1:1,2). If all people would just go back to the Scriptures and read and study to know God's will, then they would easily understand why the church is important. Once one comes to know the Biblical facts about the church, he is going to see that the Scriptures teach that if one wants to please God he will obey the commands of the Gospel to be saved and to be added to His church, the one and only church one can read about in the Bible. (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38,40,47).

Again, the reason so much has to be said about the church today is because the average person never goes to the Scripture to see what the Lord has said on the subject. Instead, he listens to men who constantly tell him that the church is not important, that one can go to heaven without being a member of the church, and

hundreds of other false teachings pertaining to the church. People, therefore, are so filled with all of these errors that it becomes necessary for someone to try to show them what the Bible actually says. With all of the false information that is already out there, and with all of the preaching and teaching that are constantly being done to put down the church, then it is difficult to get most people to see the truth on the subject. Some do, and are thrilled to finally be able to throw off the shackles of religious error, and to be a part of the Lord's family—but the majority turn a deaf ear. Yet we must continue to tell people what the true church is and of their need for becoming members of it to be saved in this world and in the world to come.

Does all of this mean, then, that the church is the saviour? No, it does not. The church is made up of the saved, and we as humans have no power to save anyone. At the same time, we read in Ephesians 5:23 that Christ is the saviour of the church, and in Acts 2:47 we read where the Lord adds the saved to His church. This means that if the Lord is the saviour of the church—His church, the one church of the Bible—then we must be the members of it to be saved. And when we obey the Gospel, the Lord saves us and adds us to His church. Therefore His church is made up of the saved! It's just that simple! What about those in the church who are not living as they should? In the end, they will be gathered out of the church and will be lost, unless they repent and return to the Lord. The Scriptures say that when one is saved and added to the church, he must be faithful to the Lord unto death if he is to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

These are the reasons, then, why so much had to be said about the church in the first century, and why so much must be said about the church today. Realize that when we preach Christ, we need to also preach the importance of the church, since the church is His spiritual body (Acts 8:12). But what about all of the denominational churches? The Lord did not promise to build them, He did not die for them, they do not wear His name, and therefore He has not promised to save them. It is just that simple.

Don't look down on the church. Don't despise it, find fault with it, and refuse to be a member of it. Christ loved the church so much that he gave himself for it, He died for it. If you oppose the church, you oppose Christ himself.

Are you a member of the Lord's church? If not, don't waste your time and risk your soul. Study God's word and learn about the church and obey the Lord. He will save you and add you to it.

# The Testimony of Archaeology

PERRY N. HALF

THE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN Evidences is an exciting and rewarding experience. My interest in Biblical archaeology, history, and geography was greatly stimulated when I visited the museums of Europe and went to the Bible Lands for six weeks in 1963. In the past two centuries, while the Bible was being vigorously attacked by skeptics, God in His providence revealed through the spade of the archaeologist a vast amount of information that harmonizes with the Bible record. Multiplied mounds, murky, well-preserved tombs of Pharaohs, and isolated caves containing ancient Biblical manuscripts have yielded up their secrets. The past has come galloping into the present, giving external evidence to the fact that God has revealed Himself to man. Our understanding of the Bible message and its environment has been increased through study of the artifacts of art, architecture, language, literature, tools, weapons, customs, dress, and other such remains.

While we are convinced that internal evidence is more than sufficient to prove that the Bible is the verbally inspired, infallible, inerrant, all-sufficient deposit of eternal truth from God, it is comforting to observe that archaeological discoveries have been found to be in harmony with Biblical declaration. We would expect this to be the case, since Biblical writers were miraculously guided by the Holy Spirit in their recording of the Divine message (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20,21; Jude 3).

Every statement of the Bible must be true if it is of God. That includes its comments on history, locations, customs, characters, geography, civilizations, etc. While much of that which has been uncovered does not seem to relate directly to the biblical text, they still give us a wealth of information about the times. This, in and of itself, is of great value in our study of the Bible. More than twenty-five thousand sites, only a few dozen of which have been excavated, serve as a potential source of almost unlimited information and exciting discoveries.

Occasionally there are discoveries that relate directly to the biblical record by referring to actual people, places, and events of the Bible. One such discovery was made by Sir Henry Layard, when he excavated the ancient city of Calah or Nimrud, established by

Nimrod (Genesis 10:10ff). In time it became one of the capital cities of Assyria. Between the years of 1845 and 1851, three palaces were uncovered containing much sculpture and statuary, and from which the celebrated Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser (859-824 B.C.) was recovered by Layard. It is today located in the British Museum in London. This limestone obelisk stands six feet six inches high and contains twenty panels, five on each side. All of the panels depict tribute being brought to Shalmaneser III. On one side, second row from the top, a figure is shown on his hands and knees paying tribute to the Assyrian king. The obelisk declares the figure to be the Israelite king, "Jehu, Son of Omri." The powerful Assyrian army (see Nahum 2:3ff and 3:2ff) marched from Calah under Shalmaneser III to attack a coalition comprising Israel, Damascus, and the coastal city-states in 841 B. C. Jehu of Israel chose to become a tributary to the Assyrians, and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser depicts the tribute of the royal staff, silver, golden vessels, tin, and fruits that Jehu paid.

Jehu, tenth king of Israel came to the throne during the time of the prophet Elisha. He exterminated Ahab's line according to prophecy (1 Kings 19:16,17; 2 Kings 9,10).

Jehu is the only king in either Israel or Judah whose "picture" or likeness we have thus far today. This testimony from the mounds of Calah agrees with the historical accuracy of the Bible. Our faith in the Bible is reinforced.

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## A "LIVING SACRIFICE"

ROYCE FREDERICK

*"I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service"* (Romans 12:1).

To understand Romans 12:1, we need to consider some of the sacrifices under the Law of Moses. That was God's law for the nation of Israel, the Jews. When Jesus died on the cross, God cancelled the Law of Moses (Gal. 3:23-25; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:4). The gospel of Christ is God's law for all people of all nations today (Jn. 12:48; Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; 2:16). But there are still many lessons for us to learn from the Law of Moses and all the books in the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).



## Our “Living Sacrifice” is NOT a sacrifice FOR SINS

**Before** their sins were forgiven, **the Jews** were instructed to sacrifice **sin offerings** and trespass offerings. These sacrifices could be called “action prophecies”—**events** similar to later events of greater spiritual importance. Each sin offering was: (1) a moment of obedient faith, and (2) a “shadow” of the true sacrifice for sin, Jesus (see Heb. 8:5; 10:1).

When Jews obeyed in faith by offering the proper sacrifices, God forgave their sins (Lev. 4:20, 26; Num. 14:19). However, the blood of bulls and goats cannot actually take away sins (Heb. 10:4). Forgiveness occurs in the mind of God. He forgave their sins because of the coming sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. **The actual payment of the death penalty** for all sins, including sins during the Law of Moses, was paid by Jesus on the cross. He suffered “...*death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant*” (Heb. 9:15; see Rom. 3:21-26).

Sin offerings had to be “*without blemish*” (Lev. 1:1-4; 5:15-18; 9:3). We are sinful, blemished spiritually by our sins (Rom. 3:23). But Jesus was sinless (1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15). He is, “...*The **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). His life is the only sacrifice which is acceptable as payment for our sins. His sacrifice for sins was “...*once for all when He offered up Himself*” (Heb. 7:27); “...*with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption*” (Heb. 9:12).

**A sinner receives the benefit** of the sacrifice of **Jesus at baptism**. Immersion in water is the moment of obedient faith when God gives us the benefit of His Son’s death, forgiving our sins. Paul reminded the Christians in Rome, “*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*” (Rom. 6:3-4; see 6:17-18; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27).

The Bible does **not** tell Christians to give ourselves as a living sacrifice **for sin**. A person cannot remove even one sin by his or her own deeds (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9). We cannot remove any sin by “doing penance” or by punishing ourselves, as some teach (see Col. 2:20-23). And we cannot remove our sin, or anyone else’s sin, by giving money to the poor or to the church. Jesus is **our only sacrifice for sin**.

## **Our “Living Sacrifice” is a Sacrifice of THANKSGIVING!**

**After** their sins were forgiven, **the Jews** offered **sacrifices of worship**, and sometimes sacrifices of **thanksgiving** (Num. 28:1-8; Lev. 7:12-15; 2 Chron. 29:31-32). Some sacrifices were free-will offerings—by free choice of the person who offered them (Lev. 1:3; 19:5; 22:19). But they did **not** offer these **in their own way**. God gave them instructions for these sacrifices, too, so they would be acceptable to Him.

Today, by God’s instructions, we approach Him in worship through singing (Eph. 5:19; see Heb. 13:15), praying (Heb. 4:16; Acts 12:12; see Heb. 13:15), and giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; see Phil. 4:18). On the first day of each week, we approach Him in worship in a very special way by partaking of the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26-28; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). **But what kind of DAILY LIFE do we bring with us?**

Romans 12:1 does **not teach** that everything we do in life is an **act of worship**. Sleeping is not an act of worship. Brushing our teeth is not an act of worship. **But everything we do should be in harmony with His will**. Everything we do is wrapped up in the package of our life as an offering to God. When we approach Him in worship, He does not merely see our actions of that moment. He sees our entire life. It is like approaching God with our life in our hands as an offering to God, for His glory.

If Jews offered the right sacrifices, but their lives were not right, God did not accept their worship (Isa. 1:11-18). Likewise, today —

If a man worships God, but does not care for his parents, his worship is worthless (Matt. 15:3-9; Eph. 6:1-3). He is *“worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Tim. 5:8).

If a man prays loving prayers, but is unkind to his wife, his prayers are *“hindered”* (1 Pet. 3:7).

If a man’s tongue blesses God, but curses men (Jas. 3:9), and if he says in song and prayer that he loves God, but hates his brother, he is lying to God (1 Jn. 4:20). He is *“nothing”* and his deeds profit nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Also see Matt. 5:23-24; 1 Tim. 2:8.

We give our bodies as a living sacrifice —

When we study, teach, and live God’s word (1 Tim. 4:12-16; Phil. 2:17).

When we serve diligently and humbly in the work of the church (1 Cor. 15:58; Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:16).

When we help our family and others in need (Jas. 1:27; Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Tim. 5:4; Gal. 6:6-10).

When we labor on our jobs with honesty, diligence, and kindness (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25).

When we avoid works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21; Jas. 1:27) and bear the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Some of the Jewish sacrifices were burnt offerings, in which the sacrifice died and was entirely consumed. In contrast, our sacrifice must be a continuing, living sacrifice of ourselves in service to God. Yet, we must be “consumed” by our love for God and zeal for His kingdom (see Matt. 6:33; Jn. 2:17; Rev. 3:15-19; 1 Cor. 9:27; Phil. 3:12-14; Lk. 13:24; 14:26-27). We should be “*zealous for good works*” (Titus 2:14). “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...*” (Eph. 2:10; see Heb. 13:16).

**We are motivated by mercy:** “*by the mercies of God*” (Rom. 12:1). This refers to the most tender compassions of God. In Romans 1-11, Paul had shown how sinful we are, yet how God extends His mercy **to** save us. If our heart is properly touched by His mercies, we will **gladly** serve Him with our whole heart and life. It is our “**reasonable service**” (12:1)—service which we **logically** (with good reason) owe to God because of what He has already done for us.

Is your life a “living sacrifice” to God?

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## UNDENOMINATIONAL

LEON BARNES

CHRISTIANITY WAS NEVER INTENDED to be divided and ripped asunder to the degree people thought of it in terms of what brand we might be a part. It was meant to be the case if one said they were Christians, it would be sufficient to identify them as followers of Christ. One of the most noble endeavors one can have in following Christ is to determine we are not going to fall into the trap of denominationalism. We will be Christians and Christians only.

But it is extremely difficult to maintain the heart for being non-denominational. The church in Corinth began quickly after their establishment to divide up into warring groups. Some were saying, “I am of Paul;” others, “I am of Apollos;” others “I am of Cephas” and others “I am of Christ.” Paul’s inspired response was, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” He even thanked God he hadn’t baptized many of them. It should be noted the steps to becoming denominational begin

with partyism in a congregation. Loyalties should always be placed with Christ alone. When we set up any man as the one we will follow and be on their side in all issues, we have started rapidly down the road to denominationalism and it isn't likely we will find a stopping place before it is too late.

To be non-denominational requires we keep the single standard of the word of God. If we allow someone's interpretation of the Word to become the standard for us, we have already set those interpretations up as our creed. When we have petty side issues that people must agree with us about for us to recognize them as real Christians, we have moved way down the road to denominationalism, often without even knowing it.

How many times have you known folks who get carried away with some small idea with which they demand everyone come into agreement with them, or they would take their Bibles and go somewhere else and declare everyone who disagreed with them to be off the mark?

Much of what is required to maintain the undenominational attitude is discussed in detail in Romans 14. One of the prime phrases is "The kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The basic point is for us to pursue peace with all men. We are not to set ourselves up as the judge of all the earth, but to allow the Lord to be the judge. We might not accept some He does, and we might accept some He doesn't, but don't make our freedom a stumbling block to others.

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## ***Owning a Bible is a Great Responsibility***

CHARLES HODGE

MAN HAS ALWAYS HAD THE PROPENSITY to educate himself beyond his ability. A God in heaven is just too naive for proud intellectuals. Yet religion will not go away. So men in ivory towers, believing in nothing still try to tell God how He ought to be. It would be funny if not so serious and harmful. A liberal, no doctrine, no hereafter does not give man any answers. Without God there are no answers. So ... think; If the Bible is not the Word (revelation) of God then man has none! Case closed ... turn out the lights. Some

men sometimes make wise observations ... but without the Bible we're just here to live perhaps one step higher than a dog. "Saving seals" will not save souls.

Christianity only talks about "true truth." People are not mere products of time and chance in a materialistic world. Who are we? Why are we here? Where are we going? Psychology, education, philosophy, and liberal religion are totally blank, here. What determines right from wrong? Is there right and wrong? What is even the reason to live in a "normal life?" An impersonal universe is hopeless.

Therefore, apart from "Biblical truth" there are only two choices on earth: 1) infantile mysticism and 2) demonic violence. "Proper religion" today focuses upon #1, superstition, feelings, silly happiness, childish testimonies. "Religion without religion?" The world without God/truth is into hedonistic violence. It is dangerous to live here.

The gospel is the awesome truth that our Creating God joined us in Christ and redeemed us at the cross. How do I know? The Bible tells me so. This love, this revelation, this historic reality is the only truth that makes sense in an ignorant, superstitious, mean world.

Owning a Bible is a great responsibility.

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## PREACHING ANOTHER GOSPEL

JAMES D. BALES

JESUS SAID TO PREACH THE GOSPEL to the whole world. The gospel is the gospel of God's grace manifested in the death of Christ for our sins, His burial and His resurrection. He ascended to heaven, made the offering in the holy of holies and now reigns at God's right hand as Savior, King and High Priest. Are we preaching another gospel if we spend any time on something other than the death, burial and resurrection of Christ?

If the answer is Yes, how much gospel did Peter preach on Pentecost? He preached the death, burial and resurrection of Christ on Pentecost though in so far as the record goes he did not mention that Christ died in our place and for our sins. I am confident that Peter did preach the message of 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. In so far as the record goes Peter spent more time preaching the credentials of Christ than he did in preaching the death of Christ for our sins. This was essential for it proved that the one who died was the Christ

who now rules as Lord (Acts 2:36).

On Pentecost, Peter, after they had ceased speaking in tongues dealt with the question and charge some had made. "What meaneth this? But others mocking said, they are filled with new wine."

Philip started with the question of the eunuch concerning who was spoken of in Isaiah 53. In answering this question, one had to deal with the rejection and death of Christ for our sins and His resurrection. More than this was dealt with.

In Acts 15 the apostles and elders in Jerusalem refuted the assertion that one must be circumcised in order to be saved. They affirmed salvation by grace but also dealt with various other matters.

In Acts 17:1-4, Paul reasoned with Jews as did Peter on Pentecost. However, in Acts 17:16-34 he started with different subject matter, since he was dealing with people who did not believe the Old Testament. He showed them the true God whom they did not know. He quoted one of their own poets and a truth he set forth. He then went on to say that God called men to repentance, for the world would be judged by the One whom God raised from the dead.

In Acts 19:1-7 Paul taught and baptized those who had the wrong baptism. Apollos was instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord. He was wrong concerning baptism, "knowing only the baptism of John." He had been accurate concerning many things (Acts 18:24-26).

There are many people today who believe in Christ, His death, burial and resurrection. They may be near the kingdom but they are not yet in it, for they have not been born of water and the Spirit (John 3:1-5). They do not understand that salvation by grace through faith involves baptism into the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6). It is not necessary to convince them of the truth of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-5), but it is necessary to convince them concerning baptism into Christ. In sermons to them I would set forth the scriptural teaching on how we obey the gospel.

Although Paul warned in 1 Corinthians against preaching another gospel, he spent most of the time in correcting various errors on a variety of matters.

It is very important for us to know, as much as we can, the condition of the audience to which we are speaking. This should influence what we shall say. Of course, sermons may be preached to the church which show how to deal with various religious errors in contrast with what the Bible teaches. Every Christian needs to be equipped as well as possible for the opportunities, duties and challenges of life.

# *Are There Degrees of Sin?*

BOB PRICHARD

THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SIN, and sins have varying earthly consequences, but there are no degrees of sin. We sometimes think of “little white lies,” which we think are not as bad as other “big lies,” but the Bible simply says “all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). The eternal consequences for sin are the same for all sins, even if they are sins we think of as only “minor sins.”

John wrote that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). To transgress the law of the land is to commit a crime. To transgress the law of God is to commit sin. The literal meaning of the word sin is “to miss the mark.” When we sin, we have missed the mark of following God’s will.

While there are no degrees of sin, sins may still be classified in certain ways. Some sins are moral sins, such as adultery and drunkenness, specifically condemned by the Bible. Other moral sins, such as gambling, are condemned in principle by the Bible. John sums up these works of the flesh, saying, “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17).

Sins of commission are sins of disobedience to God’s will. When Lot and his family escaped from the wicked city of Sodom, God warned that they were not to look back. When Lot’s wife looked back, she became a pillar of salt. Her sin was not a moral sin, but it was disobedience to God’s command (Genesis 19:26).

Another type of sin is that of not doing right—sins of omission. It is not good enough just to refrain from doing those things God has condemned. We must also do what God has commanded. James wrote, “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

The Bible warns, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23); and “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The foremost problem in the world today is a sin problem. Man is a sinner, and the consequences for sin must be paid. The wonderful news, however, is that even though man sins against the infinite God, He has provided a means of escape. Paul wrote,

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). By obeying the commands of the gospel of Christ, we can have that eternal life through Jesus Christ.

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## A ROOT OUT OF A DRY GROUND

RONNIE MCABEE

SEVEN CENTURIES BEFORE JESUS EVER began to crawl as a tiny baby upon this earth, the Messianic Prophet foretold of Him as a “tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2). A tender plant is not welcomed and accepted into harsh environments. A root is not supposed to survive in a dry ground.

As a newborn, the Tender Plant was laid down into a dirty feed trough just outside of an inn because all of the rooms were full (Luke 2:7)—and He lived. The Root out of a dry ground later found Himself in the arms of His parents, who were fleeing to Egypt to avoid His being killed by Herod (Matthew 2:13-15)—and He lived. As He traveled down a dusty road one day, He turned to someone and mentioned that He had no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58)—and He lived. His own brothers rejected Him and did not believe in Him (John 7:5)—and He lived. After returning to His hometown of Nazareth, the people that He grew up with led Him to the brow of a hill to throw Him down over the cliff (Luke 4:28-30)—and the Root out of a dry ground lived. Many of His disciples, after murmuring at His teachings, went back and walked with Him no more (John 6:60-66)—and He lived. A harsh environment of Jews took up stones to kill the Tender Plant (John 10:31)—and He lived.

Day after day and night after night the rejections, assaults, and conflicts continued. While He opened the ears of those who could not hear, many continued to close their ears to His teachings—and He lived. After the Root out of a dry ground opened the eyes of those who could not see, many continued to close their eyes to see His truth—and He lived.

Jesus was not the king that they had envisioned and desired. He did not meet their standards and did not fit the appearance of a king in their minds. We are reminded that He had “no form nor comeliness” and when the people saw Him, there was “no beauty” that they “should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2)—and He lived.



He approached the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives with the remaining eleven apostles standing next to Him; but after His arrest, all the disciples forsook Him and fled (Matthew 26:56)—and He lived.

The Tender Plant was accused of speaking blasphemy and told that He was deserving of death. His enemies spit in His face, beat Him, and struck Him with the palms of their hands (Matthew 26:65-67)—and He lived. “The soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him” (Matthew 27:27-31).

Jesus was “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3). “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). After thirty-three years, the Tender Plant died in that harsh environment. The Root out of a dry ground was “cut off out of the land of the living” (Isaiah 53:8). But after three days and three nights in the tomb, we can all say with gratitude in our hearts that He was raised from the dead and He lives.

- He suffered for us, and we need to praise Him.
- He endured the thorns on His head, and we need to be thankful for Him.
- He overcame the nails in His hands and the nail through His feet, and we need to honor Him.
- They beat Him and spit in His face, but we need to reverence Him.
- They struck Him on the head and mocked Him, but we need to respect Him.

Our sins have been washed away by His blood! “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

We need to love the Tender Plant, and cherish the Root out of a dry ground with all of our heart, soul, and mind.

# *“Of All These Hours Fear But One!”*

MAC LAYTON

INSCRIBED ON THE WALL ABOVE an ancient sundial in Cluny, France, are these memorable words: “*Of all these hours, fear but one!*” There is an hour of hours to which all your life is leading. All history flows to the final appointment at which the destiny of each person who has ever lived will be sealed forever. “Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained.” (Acts 17:31). God is keeping the book of your life where each thought and deed is recorded. Soon, perhaps much sooner than you think, “... we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or evil.” (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15).

## **THE PLAIN FACTS**

The Bible is very clear in preparing us for this final test day: (1) *It is certain.* This day is an unalterable inevitable. There will be no way to escape it, change it, or deny it. (2) *It is universal.* All nations will be gathered before the Son of Man for Judgment. (Matt. 25:32). Reprobate sinners, unfaithful Christians, good moral men out of Christ, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Jerusalem, Moscow and Washington, people of all nations will be there for this final appointment. (Rom. 14:10). (3) *It is individual.* The searching spotlight will be focused on you when your time comes to appear before the Great White Throne. (1 Cor. 3:13). You will be on your own then. No blaming society, hypocritical church members, or unfavorable circumstances for your failure to obey Christ and seek first his kingdom. No excuses will fill your mouth then ... Just you and God and the naked truth with the whole universe watching ...

## **THE BOOKS WILL BE OPENED**

The Scriptures teach us that: (1) *The Judgment will be full and complete.* “For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Eccl. 12:14). All things are naked and laid upon before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13). Nothing escapes the eyes of our Father in heaven (Jer. 23:23-24), and in that Day our heart

or hearts with all its secret sins will be fully known. (2 Cor. 4:5).

(2) *The Judgment will be under the direction of an impartial God with a merciful Saviour, presiding.* He does not respect persons. (Acts 10:34-35). Your money, beauty, brains, lands, fame, stocks, and human accomplishments mean nothing to Him. All that will matter then is whether your sins have been washed away in the cleansing tide of Jesus blood and if you have lived your life in harmony with the Father's will!

(3) *The Judgment will be conducted by a perfect standard.* All living since the death of Christ will be judged by His Gospel. (Rom. 2:16). You will not be judged by the Old Testament, and not a creed or law inscribed by human hands and synods will be there! The New Testament will read the same in that day as it does today. Mark 16:15-16 will be there. James 1:27 will be there, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 will be there. Romans 12:1-2 will be there. Jesus declared, "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). How wise for you to obey the will of God *today* so you can say in *that day*, "O, Lord, I did as you said to do!"

### **A DAY OF SURPRISES**

Jesus declared the day of Judgment would be a day of surprises. (Matt. 7:22-23). (1) Some will be surprised that *God accepts no excuses.* All our flimsy and foolish excuses and rationalizing only stir up the wrath of God. There are no two ways about it: either we obey and be saved eternally, or we do not obey and be lost forever in torment. (2) Some will be surprised that *God will not accept human churches.* Our Lord plainly said, "Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted shall be rooted up." (Matt. 15:13). How tragic that thousands are spending their lives in churches never once named in the Word of God! Being religious is not enough, you must obey the will of God, lest He say in that day, "I never knew you." (Matt. 7:21-23). (3) Some will be surprised that *God will not judge us by what others are doing, or not doing.* Husbands and wives cannot be saved merely because their mate may be a Christian, No children will be saved merely because their parents were faithful to the Lord. Each will be judged by his own work. (Rom. 14:10-12). Too many supposed Christians think their church membership will save them without being actively involved in the work of the Lord. The church where you worship may be on fire with enthusiasm for Christ, but unless you are doing your fair

share of the work it will mean nothing when you stand before the Judge of all the earth. (4) Some will be surprised that *God will not judge us by our good intentions*. Many, like Felix (Acts 24:25) intend to become a Christian when they have a convenient season. But God will judge us by our deeds, not what we plan to do in the future. (Rev. 20:12). However noble and lofty your intentions are to obey the Gospel someday, or to live a faithful Christian life, before God in Judgment they will be just another stroke in your doom unless you put them into action! (James 2:14-26).

### **THE THREE VERDICTS**

When the scenes of the Last Day are over, three verdicts will be issued: (1) "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:21-23) will be said to those who did not obey the Gospel of Christ. (2) "I know you not" (Matt. 25:12) will be the verdict to those who were once prepared but who let their lights go out. (3) "Well done, enter into the joys of the Lord" (Matt. 25:21) are the thrilling words that good and faithful servants of the Lord will hear!

### **ARE YOU READY?**

My friend, which will it be for you? Are you prepared to meet God in Judgment? It is not whether you once were ready, or that you intend to some day, but are you prepared to meet God *NOW*? God loves you so much that He sent His only begotten Son to die for you. (John 3:16). He has given to you the way of salvation of belief in Him, repentance of sins (Lu. 13:3), confession of the Christ (Rom. 10:10), and burial with Him in baptism for the remission of sins. (Acts. 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4), Through your obedience God adds you to His church (Acts 2:41), and by a faithful life of service to Christ you can meet the Master with all joy in that Day!

Your greatest obligation in life is to be ready to meet your Creator, And the amazing truth is that this Day may not be far in the misty future. You could meet the Grim Reaper of death at the next bend in the road. The night is far spent and the day is at hand. (Rom. 13:12). Over there you will give a thousand worlds like this one to make things right with God, but it will be too late then! Think! And let us in churches of Christ help you make ready for the Great Day coming!

# ***“The Kingdom of Heaven”***

DAVID ROPER

JOHN THE BAPTIZER AND JESUS both came preaching, *“The kingdom of heaven is at hand”* [Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7]. The word ***“kingdom”*** is found over hundred times in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is a major theme in those four books.

The Greek word translated ***“kingdom”*** suggests *“sovereignty and rule.”* In the Gospel Accounts, it basically refers to the realm over which the Lord reigns. The word ***“kingdom”*** is found throughout the New Testament [Romans 14:17; I Corinthians 4:20], but it was primarily used during the personal ministry of Christ. For centuries, the Jews had looked for a King [the Messiah] who would come and establish His kingdom.

However, the Jews had a false concept of the Messianic kingdom. They had in mind an earthly, political empire. Jesus said that His Kingdom is *“not of this world”* [John 18:36]. Most of His parables were kingdom parables, designed to teach the spiritual nature of the kingdom.

Several terms are used in the Gospel Accounts to refer to the kingdom. The most common term is ***“kingdom of God”*** [Matthew 19:24; Mark 4:26], found more than fifty times. Matthew’s favorite term was ***“kingdom of heaven”*** [Matthew 5:3, 10, 19]. He alone used this phrase - thirty plus times. Jesus used terms like ***“My kingdom”*** [Luke 22:30; John 18:36] and ***“My Father’s kingdom”*** [Matthew 26:29]. Sometimes simply the words ***“the kingdom”*** were used [Matthew 4:23; 13:19].

Some try to make a distinction between ***“the kingdom of God”*** and ***“the kingdom of heaven”*** but their efforts are less than convincing. John Carter wrote, *“To me, all efforts to point out a difference in their meaning are strained, and the difference claimed seems artificial.”* In Matthew 19:23,24, the two phrases are used interchangeably: *“And Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to **enter the kingdom of heaven**. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter **the kingdom of God**.’”* [Emphasis mine].

In eight parallel passages, Matthew has ***“kingdom of heaven”*** where the other Synoptics have ***“kingdom of God.”*** [For instance, compare Matthew 4:17 with Mark 1:14,15].

In the New Testament, the term **“kingdom”** is used in several different ways. Occasionally, it refers to heaven [see Acts 14:22; 2 Peter 1:11]. Most of the time, it refers to those individuals who have voluntarily submitted to the rule of the King of kings, who let the Lord reign in their hearts.

In the epistles, kingdom subjects are called **“the church.”** **“Kingdom”** maybe the preferred term in the Epistles. **“Kingdom”** and **“church”** do not refer to separate spiritual institutions, but to the same one. When Jesus spoke of His Kingdom in Matthew 16:18,19, He called it **“My church.”**

Christ’s kingdom/church had its beginning on the first Pentecost after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ [see Mark 9:1; Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-4]. Following that occasion, the kingdom/church is spoken of as being in existence [Acts 5:11; 8:1,3; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:6].

Some teach that the kingdom has not yet been established. Almost two thousand years ago, John and Jesus taught that the kingdom was **“at hand”** [that is, **“almost here”**]. Further, Jesus taught that the kingdom was to come within the life time of some of His listeners to whom He was speaking then [Mark 9:1]. The Scriptures do not teach that the kingdom is yet in the future, but rather that Christ began to reign when He ascended to God [Acts 2:29-36]. Christ is now reigning in heaven over His kingdom, and He will continue to reign until He returns at the end of this age [see 1 Corinthians 15:24-27] to take His faithful followers with Him to heaven [John 14:1-3].

Even though the word **“church”** is used more than the word **“kingdom”** after the establishment of the church/kingdom in Acts 2, do not lose sight of the fact that the Lord’s church is the kingdom.

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## ***“STAND STILL”, “GO FORWARD”, AND “GET YOUR FEET WET”!***

GLANN M. LEE

ONCE DURING THE DELIVERANCE OF THE Israelites from Egyptian bondage and once at the end of their sojourn in the wilderness, God commanded the Israelites to “stand still.”

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today: for

the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever." (Exodus 14:13.) "And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan." (Joshua 3:8.) Read the contexts in Exodus 14:13-31 and Joshua 3:7-17.

Because of their jealousy Joseph's brothers sold him into Egyptian captivity. After Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream depicting an upcoming famine, Pharaoh placed Joseph in charge of storing food for the coming famine. After the "seven years of plenty" and the subsequent famine, Jacob sent sons into Egypt to buy grain. They had to appear before Joseph who recognized them, but they did not recognize him. This resulted in Jacob and his family relocating in Egypt. In time Jacob died, Joseph died and Pharaoh died. "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." (Exodus 1:8.) this led to the enslavement of Israel to Egypt. Eventually God raised up Moses to become the leader and deliverer of Israel. Under his leadership, directed by Jehovah, the Israelites fled Egypt.

The first incident of the Israelites to "stand still" was just before their crossing the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:13.) Forty years later when the Israelites were to cross the Jordan River, God gave the second "stand still" statement. (Joshua 3:8.)

This article develops the following lessons: (1) "Stand still" and learn and follow God's directions; (2) "Go forward" because there is no progress without it; and (3) "Get your feet wet" in making the necessary sacrifices.

#### **"STAND STILL" (Exodus 14:13; Joshua 3:8.)**

God does not always act the way we may want and/or expect Him to act. An example is that of Sarah and Hagar. Sarah proposed to help God carry out his plans for a son for Abraham. (Genesis 15:1-6; 17:15-22; 18:1-15; 20:1-8.) Problems arose over Sarah's actions. (Genesis 21:8-21.)

Patience is a great lesson to be learned. The Psalmist declared: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." (Psalm 27:14.) "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." (Ecclesiastes 7:8.) "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." (Romans 12:12.) "Be patient toward all men." (1 Thessalonians 5:14.) "And

the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." (2 Timothy 2:14.) "Be patient therefore, brethren... Be ye also patient." (James 5:7-8.) Read Hebrews 12: 1-2.

### **"GO FORWARD" (Exodus 14:15.)**

There is a time to "stand still" and there is a time to "go forward."

The Christian soldier is to march forward. (Ephesians 6:10-18.) "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy 2:3.)

The Christian race demand "going forward." (Hebrews 12:1-2.) "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." (1 Corinthians 9:24.)

The Lord's Great Commission requires us to "go forward." (Matthews 18: 19-20; Mark 16: 15-16.)

The early Christians did "go forward" with the gospel. (Compare Acts 8:4; Colossians 1:23.) They "turned the world upside down." (Acts 17:6.)

Christians are to "go forward" in personal edification, personal empathy, and personal evangelism.

### **"GET YOUR FEET WET"**

"And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)... And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." (Joshua 3:15-17.)

Worthwhile accomplishments require sacrifice ("getting the feet wet"). Sacrifices include "counting the cost." (Luke 14:28.) and "laying aside every weight." (Hebrews 12:1.)

"Stick-to-it-iveness" should characterize the Christian. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." (Hebrews 6:1.) "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62.) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58.)