

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

**Vol. 49**

**May 2018**

**No. 1**

## Editorial

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

#### *Jesus Christ Is The Savior Of The World*

ALMOST TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO Jesus had made several claims about Himself, as we read in the Bible. Needless to say, He did not make false claims. Jesus was a good man, as it has been commonly accepted; and a good man cannot lie deliberately. Secondly, Jesus possessed a powerful mind, as is very much obvious from His marvelous teachings; He was the master teacher; therefore He understood and knew what He was saying. Among others, a certain lawyer confessed Jesus to be the Teacher (Luke 10:25). Another, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, acknowledged Jesus a Rabbi and said, "we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." (John 3:2). Thirdly, The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that all His claims were true. At one instance, when the Jews had challenged and asked Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" Jesus told them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:18, 19). The scripture says, He was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:21). He also told them, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40). Even though the Jews,



after His death, made His tomb or grave sure by sealing the stone and by setting a watch of guards, nevertheless, Jesus, as He had claimed, was resurrected. His body was not in the grave after third day. The record, in the Bible, says, when Jesus was dead for three days, upon the first day of the week (Sunday) there was a great earthquake near the tomb of Jesus, and an angel of God descended from heaven, he rolled away the large stone that was placed on the mouth of the grave in which Jesus' body was laid, and for fear the guards at the grave shook and became unconscious, as Jesus came out of the grave; and the angel pronounced: "HE IS RISEN" (Matthew 28; Mark 16). The grave of Jesus was found empty on the third day after His death. The Bible says, that several hundred people, besides His disciples, saw Jesus alive as He was upon earth for forty days before He had finally ascended back to heaven. The church of Christ and Christianity itself stands today as a result of Jesus' resurrection. Because if it was proven false the church of Christ and Christianity would have vanished away from the face of the earth within the first century itself, in fact, they would have never been even founded and there would be no such thing on earth today as the church of Christ and Christianity. All they, the Jews and the Romans, had to do to disprove the claim of Christ about His resurrection on the third day was to produce the body of Jesus Christ before the people. But they could not; because the body was not there in the grave.

In a single verse in the Bible, at John 14:6, Jesus had made four very powerful claims about Himself, He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus claimed to be the way to God and to heaven. Why? Firstly, He is the only one who had come from God, therefore, He knows the way. Isn't it right? (John 3:16). Secondly, He is the only one Who being the sinless, the Son of God, offered Himself to die on the cross taking the sins of the world upon Himself. He is the way to heaven because He removed the barrier, sin, which separates man from God (Isaiah 59:1, 2), by offering Himself to die as the propitiation for the sins of the world. (1 John 2:2; 4:10). "For the wages of sin is death," teaches the Bible, at Romans 6:23, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." And, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21). He is the truth, because He revealed the true God. He was the Word, Who in the beginning was with God and was God. But became flesh, a

man, and lived among people who beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14). John, therefore, boldly declared, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17). Again, He is the life; because He is the source of life (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7). He had come from heaven to provide eternal life to those who would believe in Him and obey Him. (John 3:16; Hebrews 5:8-9). To those who were seeking earthly food for their bodies, He taught, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him..... For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6: 27, 33).

Sin separates man from God. All have sinned (Romans 3:23). Every person on earth realizes he is in sin and because of that there are myriads of religions on earth. To appease God all kinds of worships and offerings are rendered to God. But as the prophet Isaiah says, "all our righteousness are like filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6). Being in sin man cannot save himself by works of his own righteousness. Even though every person desires to go back to God to live with Him in heaven, but because of the presence of sin in man no one can enter heaven. Man is helpless; he needs God's help.

Jesus Christ is God's way of making man righteous and worthy of heaven. So we read in God's book, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe : for there is no difference: For all have sinned , and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26 KJV).

After all the evidence is examined and analyzed – His birth, His life, His teachings, His works, His death and His subsequent resurrection, and countless other considerations, one is forced to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world.



# FIRST PRINCIPLES

(No. 2)

J.C. CHOATE

WHILE THE MAJORITY OF CONGREGATIONS may be constantly bombarded with first principles, there are a few churches that have swung to the opposite extreme. These are the ones where the plan of salvation is little known and the emphasis is more on a social gospel.

Although the first principles of God's word must surely be preached, a time comes when brethren need a stronger diet. When they do not get this, they become stunted, unhappy, discontented, bored, and critical. Many of these will eventually give up and quit because they are not strong enough in themselves to stand. Others will hang on because of various reasons but will be worth little to the cause of Christ. This is the kind of setting that prompts extremeism. Sometimes brethren will accept anything to get a change.

The answer to this problem is not to eliminate first principles from all preaching and teaching. To do so would be to make an even more serious mistake. Those that have done so have practically lost their identity as the Lord's people. We have all heard members say, after visiting with certain congregations, that if they hadn't known otherwise they would have thought they were attending the worship service of a denominational church. But this is just the beginning. Once a congregation heads in this direction it usually goes on to other things. Instead of becoming closer to the Lord, it gets further away. It may become denominational, have fellowship with its religious neighbours, and so on. It so waters down the gospel that it no longer even sounds like the gospel. It preaches only love all the time and stresses the social needs of the community. It becomes little more than some club or social organization that is known more for what it doesn't preach than for what it does preach. The next step would be liberalism and modernism.

In these congregations you have different kinds of people represented. Obviously the majority support this kind of thing and as a result they know little about the gospel because it is never preached to them. To attend a class you might hear most anything being discussed and most everything taught. There are usually a

few who are still aware of the need for the gospel and they long to hear it preached. That doesn't mean that they would want to hear first principles all the time, but they would love to hear the truth of God's word preached.

So many of our modern day preachers think that to be popular, up to date, to show their education, etc., that they must be original, different and unique in their approach, in the content of their lessons, and in their work as a whole. (1 Corinthians 3:18-20). To preach the same old gospel, in their opinion, just won't do. (1 Corinthians 9:16). And there are congregations that cater to this type of preacher. They want someone to work with them, or to conduct their meetings, who has a name for himself, who is popular, and who is entertaining. But such preachers and congregations keep one another weak because they have basically rejected the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. (Romans 1:16, 17). Some of these don't go as far away as they might, but they want to stay close enough to the others that they can enlighten them and encourage them to follow in their steps. It is as though they think that they have found something new and now they must share it with all the rest. But, sadly, there is nothing new about it since the Bible warns again and again about the danger of departing from the faith. (Hebrews 3:12, 13).

It is such a shame that we can't learn to hold our balance and not to swing from one extreme to the other. (Ephesians 4:11-16). Why must we either preach solely first principles or not preach first principles at all? Why must we show no emotion in our worship or lose all control of our emotions? Why can't we see the dangers of both sides and try to keep from going, to an extreme in either direction? Surely there is a safe ground to walk on and we should walk on it. (2 Timothy 3:12-14).

By partaking of the milk of the word, as new born babes, we can go on to grow and develop, and with strength we can eventually partake of the meat of the word. This is the Lord's plan. Where this plan is followed by both individuals and congregations we grow up in Christ to be the mature Christians and strong congregations that He intended us to be. In this way we can get the spiritual food we need, do the work of Christ, and find happiness and contentment at the same time. Of course this takes time and if things are not developing as we think they should then we must realize that it will not help matters to run off in some other direction. Only by remaining with God's plan can we be what the Lord wants us to be.

# THE WRONG ORDERS

G.F. RAINES

THE TERRORIZED ENGINEERS OF THE two trains that were speeding toward one another on the same track one foggy, fateful night many years ago tried to stop, but it was too late, and the destruction caused by the wreck was unspeakably terrible.

Rescuers found one of the engineers still alive. He was holding a yellow sheet of paper in his hand and saying with mournful repetition, "Someone gave the wrong orders."

Analogously, in the day when *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 5:10), many lost souls will hopelessly cry with infinite anguish, "Someone gave the wrong orders." In that great and final day, *"every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12); and the Lord Jesus Christ has solemnly warned all men that *"if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"* (Matthew 15:14).

The Bible very plainly tells us in the following passages what we must do to be saved, and anyone who says that salvation can be obtained without complying with the conditions expressed therein is simply giving the wrong orders:

Mark 16:16: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

John 3:5: *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*

Acts 2:38: *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 22:16: *"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

Revelation 2:10: *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

Jesus, *"the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Hebrews 5:9), says: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

Let us never forget that *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

# ***The First Century Christians***

KENNETH MCCLAIN

The first century Christians were members of the Lord's church and met on the first day of the week to worship (Acts 20:7); to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34); to sing hymns of praise (Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16,17); to pray together (Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:17); to give of their means to support the church, the greatest work in the world (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7); and to receive the greatest message man can receive, God's Word (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

These Christians worked and worshiped together in local churches, independent of each other; they had no central organization governing them. Each local church was governed by a group of elders (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5). These local churches were linked only by their common ties to Christ, who is the head of the church which He built.

If we are members of the same church as the first century Christians, we must proclaim the same message—the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We will teach that men must believe in Christ and confess that faith. We will teach that men must turn from sin and be baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26,27). We will teach that men must submit to Christ as did the first century Christians, and be added to the Lord's church as were they (Acts 2:47).

If we are true Christians we will seek to restore the New Testament pattern in purpose, doctrine, worship, organization, life, and joy. The purpose of Christ's church then and now is the same—to seek and to save the lost world (Luke 19:10).

---

## ***QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP***

DALTON KEY

THE QUALITIES EXPECTED OF ELDERS in the church may be found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and in Titus 1:7-10. Much has been said and written over the years concerning the interpretation of these attributes and the stringency with which they should be applied.

Some hold to an ultra-rigid view of elders' qualifications, requiring absolute perfection from prospective bishops on every point. And

because no one is without some faults, some weaknesses, they know of no one anywhere qualified to serve.

Others would travel to the opposite extreme, seeing the Bible's requirements as little more than benign suggestions, to be used or modified or discarded as seen fit.

It is true that many of the characteristics are rigid and unbending. Either a candidate is the husband of one wife, or he isn't. He either *"rules well his own house,"* *"having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly,"* or he doesn't. Is he *"not given to wine?"* Is he true to the Scriptures, *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught?"*

Others may be more difficult. A man must be *"not self willed, not soon angry,"* and he should be *"sober-minded,"* but to what degree? How hospitable must he be? How vigilant?

In these areas of degrees, surely one's ability to lead and show a worthy example must be considered. Shepherds in the church are to be *"examples to the flock"* (1 Peter 5:3). A man may not be perfect in these areas, but does he serve as a worthy example with respect to them? Is he a man the congregation can easily and comfortably follow? If he can't be looked up to as a fitting example of Christianity, what right has he to lead or oversee the body of Christ?

Some necessary requirements for elders are self-evident. They must be "elders," older men, of sufficient age and maturity to warrant respect. They must be capable of leading. And they must be involved, with a body willing to follow them. Leadership without willing followership becomes nothing more than futile dictatorship.

---

## Worship, a Habit?

RON STOUGH

Often when encouraging an unfaithful Christian to return to worship with the saints, the reply will be, "Oh, I know I ought to be there, but I guess I've just gotten out of the habit. Maybe one of these days I'll get started again."

Regarding worship as a habit seems to put it on the same level as brushing our teeth or taking a walk. Until we view worship as an integral part of our daily lives, it may be easy for us to break the "habit" of worship.

The purpose of our worship is to honor and magnify the God of



the universe. This is going to require a love, reverence, and devotion in our hearts each day of the week. Only when we live with God daily, and know Him intimately, will we feel the desire to exalt and honor Him on the Lord's Day. A deep understanding of the love that sent Jesus to the cross for our sins will elevate worship from a habit to a privilege.

The joyful Psalmist urged, "*Exalt ye the Lord, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy*" (Psalm 99:5). We serve a holy God! Our souls cry out for a spiritual fellowship with our Creator—the One in whose image we were created. We must cultivate that desire with knowledge, self-discipline, and training so that we, like David, can say, "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord*" (Psalm 122:1).

---

## **JUDAS**

BILL DILLON

### **Judas' Mistake**

Only the dead and the unborn make no mistakes. Some mistakes are minor and can be easily fixed. Others are major and carry consequences which may last for a lifetime or an eternity. The worst mistake any man can make is to reject Christ. Judas Iscariot committed this error and found himself condemned.

### **Judas' Beginning**

Judas started out well. He was a close associate of the Lord, even being the treasurer for the band of apostles. He was chosen by Christ; he was given numerous opportunities; he witnessed some of the most notable and significant events in the history of the Gospel, but Judas allowed the Devil to enter into him, and he went out into the darkness of night to betray the Son of God (John 13:26-30).

### **Judas' Character**

John 12 tells us something of the character of Judas. Judas "*was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it*" (John 12:6). Nothing is said in Scripture about any noble motive Judas may have had. The only excuse for Judas was that he was covetous and greedy, and this was a poor excuse at that. Paul wrote that "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Timothy 6:10). The desire for ill-gotten gain preyed upon his mind, and Judas betrayed the best friend mankind ever had.

## Judas' Price

Judas sold out the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, but this was not the real price of his mistake. He received no benefits from the money and never had another minute's joy in this world or in the world to come. Judas selected suicide as the way to deal with his guilt (Acts 1:17,18). He can be described as "the man who kissed the door of heaven and went to hell."

Men today still betray Christ. Judas betrayed Him with a kiss; modernism accomplishes the same by speaking well of the Lord. When unbelievers say that Jesus was "a good teacher" or "a good man" and go no further in recognizing the deity of Christ, they too have betrayed the Son of God.

When we live unrighteously, we betray Him. When we refuse the counsel of His word, we betray Him. If we just drift carelessly through life, we betray Him.

All the wealth in the world and all the pleasures imaginable would one day be freely and gladly traded for an opportunity to correct the mistake many are now making. It will be too late then.

Sinner, won't you obey the Gospel? (Mark 16:16)

---

## The Fountain, Opened for Sin

CLEM THURMAN

*"IN THAT DAY THERE SHALL BE A FOUNTAIN opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1). When man was placed in the Garden of Eden, he sinned and was cast out (Gen. 3). Ever since, we all have followed in Adam's footsteps: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:10,23). God has never looked lightly upon man's sins.*

When He put Adam and Eve in Eden, God told them, *"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 2:16-17). Ever since, death has been the penalty for sin against God: *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezek. 18:20). The apostle Paul wrote, *"For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). Because *"all have sinned"* (Rom. 3:23), all are under penalty of death.

The only cleansing agent for sin that God has ever authorized is blood: *"Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22). That is the reason for the animal sacrifices which were offered under the Old Testament. But in those sacrifices was not found a real cleansing, for: *"It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins"* (Heb. 10:4). The only thing that could cleanse was the blood of God's own Son: *"For if the blood of goats and bulls ... sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ... cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Heb. 9:13-14).

### **ISRAEL'S HISTORY AND THE PROPHECY**

The shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary is that *"fountain opened for sin"* of which the prophet wrote. Zechariah, like the prophet Haggai, was raised up by God to bolster the drooping spirits of the Jews. They had begun the rebuilding of the temple, but had become disheartened, and, because of adverse conditions, ceased the work completely. Jerusalem was still weak, and discouragement among the people of God prevailed. In spite of that, Zechariah urges them on to the noble task of restoring the *"House of God."*

The prophet tries to stir Judah up to do their duty to God, and to change a deplorable situation into a hopeful one. To do this, he employs two tactics. First, he reminds them of past blessings from God. Second, even though he must speak of the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem, Zechariah enlivens their dreams with numerous prophecies of the Messiah (Greek, *"Christ"*), who will come and reign from the throne of David (Zech. 12-14).

At this time of glowing prophecies of the Messiah, Zerubbabel is the living representative of David's family. God had given the task of building His house (the temple) to David's descendants. First, there was Solomon, now Zerubbabel, and finally, there was to come the Messiah, the Christ: *"Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne"* (Zech. 6:12-13).

*"In that day"*—the day of the reign of the Messiah—*"there shall be a fountain opened for sin."* This fountain would grant far more than legal purification and ceremonial cleansing. It would be a real cleansing, in which the sinner could have the guilt of their sin removed and the separation caused by their sins thereby bridged!

When the fountain for sin was opened, there would be an end of sin, with regard to guilt, and an end to sin with regard to its pollution. The sinner would now be able to *"come boldly to the throne of grace"* (Heb. 4:16) and could *"draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith"* (Heb. 10:22).

### **THE FOUNTAIN OPENED AT CALVARY**

The multiplied sacrifices for sin imposed by the Old Law were inadequate to forgive *"sin and uncleanness."* However, they served as shadows and symbols of the sacrifice of the Christ, which did offer forgiveness. On the cross of Christ, the prophet's prediction was fulfilled: *"For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly ... But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life"* (Rom. 5:6-10).

The hopes of Israel, and of all men in every nation and every age, gather at the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men have sinned and thus forfeited their right to the *"tree of life"* (Gen. 3:22,24). Because our sins separated us from God (Isa. 59:1-2), the law demanded our death (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). But *"God is love"* (1 John 4:8), and so the death of the only Begotten Son of God became a divine MUST.

The same God whose justice demands that sin be punished, is also the God whose love led Him to send His Son into the world to die for our sins and reconcile us to Himself. Jesus, by His own sinless life and the sacrifice of Himself, satisfied the demands of the law and the requirements of God's justice, making it possible for all men to be saved (Heb. 2:9).

### **THE FOUNTAIN OPENED FOR ALL MEN**

Not all men will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14; Rev. 21:8). The Lord said that some would *"go away into eternal punishment"* (Matt. 25:46). It is easy, therefore, to determine that the blood of Christ does not cleanse everyone. Jesus is *"the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Heb. 5:9). The great doctrine of the atonement cannot be understood until men see the connection of the Lord's plan with the fact that we are all saved *"by grace through faith."* But that faith must be a faith that *"works through love"* (Gal.

5:6) in order to please God. That means obedience to the will of God, as He reveals it in His word.

The *"fountain"* will not cleanse anyone who continues to rebel against the will of God. He gave no non-essential commands, and *"the grace of God"* that brings salvation and has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11) cannot save anyone in disobedience (2 Thes. 1:7-9). That means that the entire chart and compass of the gospel *"is the power of God unto salvation"* (Rom. 1:16). There is a special link between this *"fountain for sin"* and the following.

### **1. The New Testament**

When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, the law of Moses was *"nailed to the cross"* with Him, and its laws and rules were ended (Col. 2:14-17). A new priesthood was established, which made necessary a new law (Heb. 7:12). And Jesus, by His death, became our High Priest: *"But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second"* (Heb. 8:6-7).

The Old Covenant, the Law of Moses, was meant only to be temporary, and belonged to a plan of which the end was its own abolition (Gal. 3:16-24). The first testament was dedication with the blood of animals (Heb. 9:18-20). But the blood of Jesus Christ sealed and made valid the New Testament (Heb. 9:15-17). When Christ gave the Lord's Supper, He spoke of the fruit of the vine as *"my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins"* (Matt. 26:28). Isn't it strange that people still fail to grasp the distinction the *"fountain"* has made between the two covenants? It posed the first problem in the church which Jesus established (Acts 15), and today many religious folk still think we live under the laws and rules of the Old Testament.

### **2. The Church Of The Lord**

Jesus stated His mission in this world most clearly: *"The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). The price paid for our salvation, is also the price paid for His church: *"The church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). Those who are saved from their sins were *"bought with the price"* (1 Cor. 6:20), which was the blood of Jesus Christ. We have *"redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Eph. 1:7). The

blood of the covenant, which saves one from sin, also purchased His church.

The Scriptures show that *"every spiritual blessing"* is *"in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). It is *"in Christ"* that we are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16) by the blood of the cross (Eph. 2:13). Further, the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), and those *"in Christ"* are in His body, the church. But notice this: *"The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved"* (Acts 2:47). The same Lord who saves sinners, then adds them to His church. The same blood that saves sinners purchased the church. The church sustains a special relationship to the *"fountain,"* and that is the reason the devil never ceases to try to persuade folk that membership in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not necessary.

### 3. Baptism Into The Death Of Christ

Christ purchased our salvation with His own blood, the *"fountain opened for sin."* Thus, the conditions prescribed by the gospel which was sealed with His blood, must bear a distinct connection to salvation. The Bible says, *"For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:26-27). And again, *"Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"* (Rom. 6:3). Believers are *"baptized into Christ,"* and thus one is not *"in Christ"* until he or she is baptized into Christ.

When people heard the preaching of the gospel of salvation by the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), they asked, *"What shall we do?"* God's answer was: *"Repent ye, and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins"* (v. 38). Why be baptized? Note again Rom. 6:3. When we are baptized into Christ we are *"baptized into his death."* There is the *"fountain opened for sin,"* and baptism is necessary to reach that cleansing blood! That is why those folk, when they *"received the word"* were baptized immediately (Acts 2:41). It is no wonder, then, that the Lord told the apostles: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). Is it any wonder, then, that Satan and his ministers disparage baptism and claim it is not essential?

Satan prefers that you be an unbeliever. But, if he fails at that point, he will attempt to thwart your redemption by casting reflection upon all that the *"fountain opened for sins"* requires. The blood of Christ cannot save those who spurn the New Testament and try to

go back to the Old. The blood of Christ cannot save those who refuse the church, which His blood purchased. The blood of Christ cannot save those who reject baptism *"into his death,"* the very means by which they reach His blood. Friend, the *"fountain for sins"* is opened for you. Come to that *"fountain"* and be saved!

---

## *Busy Here And There*

T. PIERCE BROWN

IN 1 KINGS 20:13-43 THERE IS AN INTERESTING story of Benhadad whom the Lord had marked for destruction. King Ahab, who cared nothing about God's will, word, work or way, called him "brother," made a covenant with him and let him go.

God's prophet came to him with this story, a sort of parable, similar in purpose to the one Nathan told King David. "And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king, and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he is missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be: thyself hath decided it. And he hasted and took the headband away from his eyes; and the king of Israel discerned that he was of the prophets. And he said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand the man whom I had delivered to destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria." (1 Kings 20:39-43.)

The difference in the response of Ahab and David is significant. Ahab went to his house sullen and vexed. David confessed, repented and was forgiven.

The thought that kept striking me with sledgehammer force was, "As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone." Is there any lesson there that applies to me? I am so busy with thousands of students doing correspondence Bible courses. I am so busy speaking and writing to encourage evangelism, both personal and impersonal, at home and abroad. I am so busy writing articles for brotherhood publications and books. I am so busy attending meetings, visiting

sick and needy. All of these are worthwhile activities, and I am glad that God has allowed me to be a co-worker with Him in these activities. But I have neighbors who live next door to whom I have not presented the gospel. I asked myself, "If on the judgment day the Lord should remind me that here were daily opportunities confronting me for helping to save the lost next door, would my reply be that I was busy here and there and they were gone?"

I confess that even after 50 years of preaching the gospel, I do not know how to allocate the time of which God made me a steward. How much time to spend in studying God's word, how much to spend in writing about what I have learned, how much to spend sharing the good news with my neighbors, or how much to just quietly sit and meditate on God's grace and goodness. I do not know.

But I do know that the thought of being busy here and there and finding one gone for whom God left me the opportunity and responsibility to help touches my heart. I am not suggesting that we will be lost simply because we did not always know how to keep our priorities straight. But I am suggesting that we may have contributed to someone else staying lost because we were busy with some things when we should have been busy with others.

Have you decided which excuse you will use for not doing the primary job for which God will hold you responsible, that of fishing for men? Will it be, "I am too timid. I just cannot speak to my friends or neighbors about Jesus?" Will you have some reason for being able to talk about everything else under the sun but this? If your excuse is, "I was busy here and there" will you also have some answers about how important were the things about which you were busy? Jesus said, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19.) He did not say, "If you do not get too busy here and there."

I am glad that I do not know what God is going to do about those of us who have failed in this respect. I have no doubt that God in His gracious love forgives every Christian who truly repents and asks forgiveness. But there are some things of which we need to be aware.

1. True repentance involves the kind of Godly sorrow that leads one to determine not to disobey God's will. Is a person penitent who knows that he is not properly about his Father's business and persists in deliberately failing to try to do better?

2. Although we may not miss heaven just because we failed to get our priorities straight, someone may. The consequences of our failure will be eternal. There are untold millions who are dying untold,



because most of us are busy here and there and they are gone. Note an important point. I am not the cause of some other person being lost. He is lost because of his own sin. But the principle of Ezekiel 33:7-9 still applies. "So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not away; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

We have lost many opportunities that are presented at certain times of our lives. As young people we have opportunities to develop habits that will glorify God. But we may be busy here and there and they are gone. Young parents have the opportunity to take their precious child on a knee and tell him the stories of Jesus and others in the Bible that would change his life. Some are busy here and there and they are gone.

The principle of which we speak applies to property, position or power. It applies to talents, time or thoughts. You may find yourself saying, "I once had money I could have used for the glory of God and the good of man, but I was busy here and there and it is gone." "I once had position or power to have influenced some change in government, society or church activity that would have been good, but the opportunity is gone." "I once had great abilities, active mind, or noble resolves, but I was busy here and there and now have 'old timer's disease' and they are gone."

The farmer who does not plan and plow and plant when spring comes may wish and weep and wail when winter comes, but to no avail. Shakespeare was right when he said, "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries."

Being busy here and there is not enough. We must be busy about the important things—things that count for eternity. We must be busy at the right moments. Unless our primary aim in life is to glorify God and let Jesus have the first place in our plans, we may find ourselves in the same condition as the man in this parable. What are you busy doing?

---

# From What Source Do We Learn Christian Faith?

HOLLIS MILLER

WERE YOU GIVEN THE CHOICE of only one source from which to learn Christian faith, what source would you choose? Most people would likely choose the New Testament. They would do so because it was written by men who were either directly associated with Jesus or by men who were associates of those who did witness His work and teaching. The associates of Jesus heard Him teach, they witnessed His miracles, and were eye witnesses of many other of his deeds. They also saw him after His bodily resurrection from the dead.

The apostle John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1.) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) The same apostle also wrote: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you...." (1 John 1:1-3.)

The apostle Matthew wrote concerning the birth of Jesus: "... and she shall bring forth a Son and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21.)

Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, quoted Jesus as saying: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) And the writer of Hebrews declared that Jesus tasted death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9.) These, and many similar passages, establish the mission of Jesus to mankind.

Following His resurrection, Jesus commanded His apostles to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things He had commanded them. (Matthew 28:19,20.) The book of Acts is a record of approximately the first thirty years of carrying out the Lord's command. Disciples were made, and churches were established in many lands.

The early disciples of Jesus were called Christians. (Acts 11:26.) However, the most common designation for them was saints. (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; and other texts.) The word saint means holy; holy because those who are so recognized are separated to God, having been delivered from the defilement of sin. The modern idea of saint is one who has been so designated because he/she lived an especially holy and righteous earthly life. Such a concept of saint is unknown in the New Testament.

Sadly, with the passing of the centuries since Jesus and His apostles lived and taught, their teaching has been altered by the philosophies and theologies of men. As a result there is great confusion in the general Christian world. That the confusion is not pleasing to God is made plain by the declaration of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion. Reason requires that all of the various systems of belief which wear the name Christian cannot be derived from the teaching of Jesus and His apostles. How, then, does one decide what to believe? A few questions will help.

**1. Did the writers of the New Testament understand Christianity?** If they did, it is certainly reasonable to turn to them for guidance in matters of faith.

**2. Were the first Christians true Christians?** If they were, then should it not follow that all today who believe as they believed are also true Christians? Does it not also follow that all who refuse to believe as the first Christians believed should at minimum hold their faith in suspect? It is important to recognize that the New Testament does not teach anyone to be a disciple of church doctrine(s). Rather, it teaches us to be disciples of what Jesus and inspired men taught.

**3. If one finds that a particular church doctrine(s) does not agree with the teaching of the new Testament should not the doctrine(s) be abandoned?** If not abandoned, then has the church doctrine not replaced Jesus as Lord? (See Luke 6:46.)

What are some of the basic teachings of the New Testament? (Note: space does not permit mentioning every teaching.) (1) All men must believe in Jesus. (John 3:16.) (2) All men must repent of their sins. (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30.) (3) All who believe in Jesus are to be baptized for/unto the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16.) (4) Worship of God is to be in keeping with the worship He seeks, not patterned after human preference. (John 4:23,24.) (5) Life is to be

lived in harmony with Jesus' teaching. (Matthew 7:24,25; 1 John 2:4.) (6) Love is to live in the heart, mercy is to be rendered, and prayers are to be uttered.

Jesus did not come into the world to introduce a series of confusing and contradicting teachings. Rather, He came to draw all men to Himself, and to fashion unity among all who would follow Him. (John 17:20-23.) How sad it is that a faith that is meant to be united in oneness has become a tangle of factions, each of which is going its separate way. Such cannot possibly be harmonized with the Lord's prayer that all who would follow Him be one. What is the solution? Can it be other than a return to the New Testament, permitting it to be the sole guide in all matters pertaining to faith and practice?

---

## Lessons from the CATACOMBS of Rome

WAYNE JACKSON

THE TERM "CATACOMB" DERIVES from a compound Greek term with the components *kata* (down) and *kymbe* (hollow). The word is used of that vast network of tombs beneath the city of Rome (and at other places as well) where ancient Christians buried their dead—and even met for worship during times of severe persecution. It has been estimated that this maze of corridors and burial vaults, if strung together, would stretch out some 600 miles. Estimates of the number of tombs vary from 1,750,000 to 4,000,000; they represent the burial of Romans from the 2nd to the 5th centuries A.D. There are a number of valuable lessons from the catacombs.

**Historicity of Christ**—The catacombs are filled with art works (ancient graffiti) which testify to the martyrs' deep faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Epitaph inscriptions like this one are frequent: "Victorina, in peace and in Christ." Common among the inscriptions was the sign of the fish. The Greek word for fish (*ichthus*), became an acrostic symbol for: *Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior*. Surely the ancient martyrs had a better sense of whether Jesus Christ was an actual historical character than some modern atheist.

**The Scriptures**—The fact that much of the art work in the catacombs was taken from various accounts in the Bible—both Old Testament and New Testament—reveals how widely the Scriptures must have been circulated in those early centuries of the church's history. There are representations of Adam and Eve, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Moses' miracle of bringing water from the rock,

Daniel in the lions' den, Jonah, the visit of the Wise Men, Jesus as the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd, etc.

There is another point to be made. Many of the names mentioned in the epistles of Paul are found carved upon the walls of the catacombs. This does not mean, of course, that they represent the actual people in Paul's correspondence; it does suggest that the biblical record is an accurate reflection of the nomenclature of that day, and thus possesses an aura of authenticity.

**The Miracles of Jesus**—The New Testament represents Jesus as a miracle worker. Some thirty-five individual miracles are ascribed to Him, in addition to numerous generic references (see John 20:30,31). Many modern scholars, yielding to the influence of skeptics like David Hume (1711-1776), deny that Jesus performed miracles.

Clearly, though, the primitive Christians were convinced of the Lord's miracle-working powers. Among the art works of the catacombs, there are depictions of Jesus' baptism, with the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. There are reproductions of the healing of the paralytic man (Mark 2), and the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11). There are reflections of the water-to-wine miracle at the wedding in Cana (John 2), as well as the feeding of the great multitude with the loaves and fish (John 6).

**The Growth of the Church**—A consideration of the material in the book of Acts shows how explosive the growth of the early church was, and the saints in Rome were no small part of this. The faith of the Roman Christians was widely known (Romans 1:8; 16:19). Blaiklock says: "The most conservative interpretation of the Catacomb burial figures would, therefore, suggest that ... one-fifth of Rome's people in the middle Empire were Christians, and it is possible that the proportion was at times much greater." There is another factor to be considered as well. The tombs of the catacombs represent about ten generations of believers. This would suggest that the early devotees of Christianity passed the Gospel along to their offspring. It's called "vertical evangelism."

**Christianity and Intellectualism**—Atheism alleges that the Christian faith is only for the ignorant and those who are void of reason. Gibbon charged that the early church consisted almost exclusively of "the dregs of the populace." The catacomb evidence has shown, though, that Christianity invaded the ranks of the middle and upper classes, and made an impact even among the intellectuals. Many of the tombs appear to have belonged to families of the aristocracy (see Acts 17:4).

**Persecution**—The Lord had promised that His followers would be persecuted (Matthew 5:10-12). In A.D. 64, Nero launched a

vicious reign of terror against the church, as did subsequent Caesars. The Christians went underground (amongst the tombs—where the superstitious Romans would not follow) to worship. Amazingly, though, the catacomb graffiti reveal no images of sorrow or complaining; rather, a vibrant spirit of joy and triumph is everywhere evidenced. What faith those saints possessed!

**Apostasy**—The record of the catacombs is not entirely positive. Just as Paul predicted that there would be an apostasy from the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:1ff; 1 Timothy 4:1ff), so the record of the tombs reveals a drifting from the primitive faith. For example, there is graffiti testimony that encourages prayers to and for those who are dead (which later becomes fully developed in Catholicism). Though the Christians constructed baptisteries in the catacombs, there is one picture where “baptism” is being administered by the pouring of water. But there is also a heathen god in the scene—which reveals a woefully compromised faith. Pristine Christianity was eventually corrupted. Eternal vigilance is the price of truth!

---

## *Do You Believe In The Ten Commandments?*

RANDY BAKER

THIS IS A RELATIVELY COMMON QUESTION in religious discussions and can present somewhat of a dilemma for a person who understands the Biblical distinction between the Old and New Covenants. If one responds in the negative to the question, many would equate that with rejection of God and everything that is holy. However, one cannot answer in the affirmative and be true to Biblical teaching on this subject. One passage that deals directly with this subject is Romans 7:1-7. Here, the Apostle Paul speaks of being freed from the law that we might be joined to another, that is, Him who was raised from the dead. If there is any question about which law we are freed from, verse seven clearly identifies it as the law that said, “Thou shall not covet.” This was the tenth commandment that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Many of our sincere religious friends and neighbors have accepted the teaching that the “Ten Commandments” are God’s laws for ALL PEOPLE for ALL TIME. Yet, when we turn to Scripture, that is not what we find. In Exodus 19:5-6, where the covenant is about to be given, it is abundantly clear that this covenant was with the nation of Israel that had been delivered from Egyptian bondage. When Moses repeated the giving of the Ten Commandments in

Deuteronomy, chapter five, he states that the fourth commandment—sabbath observance was given to the nation of Israel, verse 15. They were not given to all mankind, but were given to the nation of Israel as a part of their covenant with God.

That the influence of these teachings has been a great blessing to humanity, no thinking person would deny. They have had an impact beyond the nation of Israel upon the development of civil laws that prohibit theft and murder and made the world a better place for all mankind. Interpersonal relations will improve when individuals practice the last six commandments ... show respect to parents, practice marital fidelity, refuse to steal, tell the truth and do not covet.

The fact that the Ten Commandments were a part of the law that was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross, Colossians 2:14, does not mean that individuals are now free to do as they please. Violating the principles that were laid down in the Ten Commandments would cause one to violate the law of Christ, under which we now live. The exception would be the one with reference to sabbath observance. The other nine commandments are either restated or given in stronger form as a part of the law of Christ. One illustration of this point is the seventh commandment which prohibited adultery is strengthened by Jesus' teaching that not just the physical act of adultery is condemned, but also the looking upon a woman to lust after her. (Matthew 5:28.)

Here are a couple of closing observations. First, the giving of these laws demonstrates the need of the human family to have rules and regulations regarding how they should behave. Jeremiah correctly observed that "it is not within man that walketh to direct his own footsteps." (Jeremiah 10:23.) Chaos rules when every individual does what he thinks is right, rather than living by an objective standard. (Judges 17:6; 21:25.) Secondly, the Ten Commandments suggest individual responsibility. They were given to the nation of Israel, but they were to be applied by individuals. Failure to observe the commandments carried specific penalties. (Exodus 21:17.) The new covenant, or law of Christ, likewise stresses individual accountability. (2 Corinthians 5:10.)

An appropriate response when someone asks if you believe the Ten Commandments might be, "I probably believe the same thing about them that you do." Most people who say they believe these were God's law for all people for all time, do not practice 'sabbath observance' and thereby demonstrate that they do not really believe they are binding today. In order to observe the fourth commandment, one would have to worship on Saturday and the overwhelming majority, by their actions, demonstrates that they do not believe it

to be binding. Perhaps, it would not be inappropriate to ask why those who say they believe the Ten Commandments are universally binding for all time why they ignore the fourth of the ten.

## Commitment In Other Contexts

JANCE CORDLE

1. A man accepts a position with a company and pledges loyalty to them. He works for them for many years and turns down overtures from other companies. He is also a Christian who once stood before God and several witnesses and pledged his love and loyalty to one woman for the rest of his life and then left her a few years later because he "just didn't love her any more." How committed is he?
2. A woman finds a charity that is close to her heart. She believes in it and is willing to work hours, even days at a time in its behalf. She also is a Christian and hears the requests for volunteers at church in a number of events, but just doesn't feel the compulsion to help. How committed is she?
3. A young man goes to college and becomes a fan of the school's football program. He is willing to attend a game any day, any time. The weather doesn't matter and the time doesn't matter. He is also a Christian, and when he attends a worship service, he is highly agitated if it goes past the expected one hour. How committed is he?
4. A young lady drives down the road and listens to her favorite songs on the radio. She sings along with the artist and is carried away by her enthusiasm. She is also a Christian and in the singing of the songs of the church she barely opens her mouth and is glad when she finally "gets it over with." How committed is she?
5. A man is the paragon of patience at work. A co-worker can ask any question, no matter how fundamental, and get a patient, logical response. He is a Christian, but when he gets home, he regularly treats his wife and children with contempt and rudeness. How committed is he?
6. A woman is a member of a political party. She is very active and is vocal to her friends concerning her political views. Though she is a Christian, she rarely mentions that to her friends. How committed is she?
7. A man becomes a golfer; he is smitten with the game. He is willing to pay good money for all the basic equipment and is willing to go beyond the ordinary expense to equip himself or to play. He is a Christian and when faced with the opportunity of giving of his means, he writes the check for a minute percentage of his income. How committed is he?

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37.)