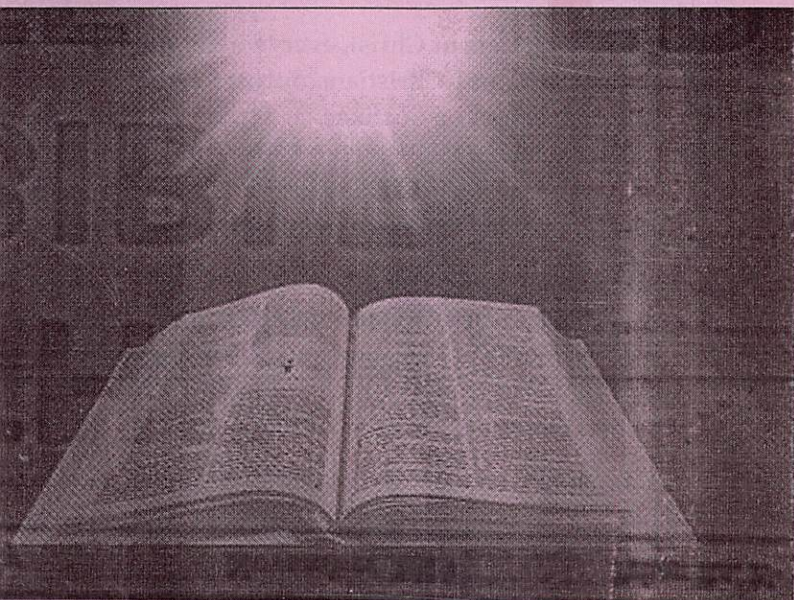


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December 2020

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THE IBLE EACHER



Our Plea

Let the Truth Prevail

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—**Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we can read in the Bible** (Matthew 16:18; Col 1:18). That all organizations of the Church of the Bible everywhere may be known as church of Christ, as we read at Romans 9:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:12).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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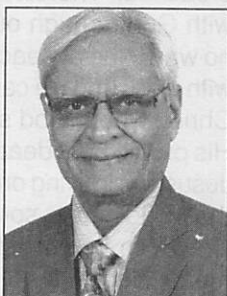
December 2020

No. 8

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

*"Thanks Be To God, Who Gives
Us Victory Through Our
Lord Jesus Christ"*



FEELING OF FEAR AND INSECURITIES has become a common place now. There is no place on this earth where we could go and feel secured. People everywhere are avoiding travelling by any mode of transportation, be it airplanes, trains, buses or any other. Indeed this is a world of insecurities where diseases and calamities are not uncommon. A huge number of people in the last few months have lost their loved ones due to the virus and other diseases globally. Others have lost their houses and material possessions due to floods and fires and other calamities or accidents. This reminds us of what the inspired writer of the Scripture wrote at James 4:13-14, "Come now," he said, "you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." Jesus knew this and He taught about it a long time ago in His great "Sermon on the Mount," where he said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21).

Jesus knew that if we depend solely upon things of this earth we will definitely fail. Because in this world there is nothing that is dependable. As also the inspired apostle John wrote, "Do not love the world, or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2:15-17). So what is the answer? *Is there any place where we can feel protected and secured? Is there any place where we could go for peace?* There is none on this earth. But Jesus said to His followers, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace, in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). The apostle Paul preached, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1). There is no way to be at peace in life and in this world unless we have peace with God. And we can make peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent to be the propitiation for our sins, through His propitiatory death on the cross by the will of God. (1 John 4:10). Jesus, while living on this earth, knew that He was going to overcome the world and its sorrows; He knew that He was going to overcome sin which had created enmity and separation between God and man (Hebrews 4:15; Isaiah 59:1-2); He also knew that He was going to die on the cross by the will of God to be the propitiation for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2); too, He knew that He would defeat death, the spiritual death, the cause of separation of man from God, when He would be raised from the dead and thus would become the Savior of all who would believe in Him and obey His commandments (Hebrews 5:8, 9; Mark 16:15-16). So He said, "In Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (or you will find suffering, as another translation puts it); but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Jesus Christ, Whom the Bible describes as the Word of God, Who was with God in the beginning , and was God Himself, and became a man (John 1:1-2, 14), to save man from sin and its consequence, the eternal death in hell, is the only answer to man's feeling of fear and insecurity . Knowing that this world is highly insecure, I also know that if a disease or a calamity or an accident or a bomb destroy my body, yet all of these put together cannot destroy my soul; because I believe in Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for my sins, and I have obeyed His command to be

saved from sin (Acts 2:38), and I am trying each day to live by His teaching by following His steps (1 Peter 2:21). With the apostle Paul, who was also a follower of Christ, I can boldly say, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57). I firmly believe in what Jesus promised to His followers, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3). So if we believe in Jesus and are trying our best to live our lives on this earth by following His teaching then through Him we know that we have peace with God, and the almighty God will take care of us when the life of this earth is over. So be of good cheer, because Jesus Christ has overcome the world.

CONFESSING UNTO SALVATION

J.C. Choate



WE OFTEN REFER TO the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God as being a good confession. This seems to be a fine definition because if there is any confession which can be called good, it would certainly be this one. The sweetest words that can fall from the lips of mortal man is that he believes that Christ is God's only begotten Son.

To confess is to acknowledge; to make a certain thing or things known; to declare a certain truth, or truths, etc. This is exactly what takes place when making the good confession. The Bible teaches that before one can be saved he must publicly state his faith in Christ.

The Lord says: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32,33). Thus, the Lord has promised that if we will confess him before men he will confess us before the Father. On the other hand if we deny him before men he will deny us before the Father. Please note that the Lord assures us that WHOSOEVER shall confess him or deny him shall be

confessed or denied before the Father in heaven. The decision is left up to man in either case, with the assurance that Christ's action will be based on the same.

Now listen to the words of the apostle Paul as he speaks on this same subject: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10). From this verse of scripture we learn that one must confess with the mouth, and in the next place, the confession is unto salvation. The last part is especially interesting since many claim that all a person must do to be saved is to confess faith in Christ. But Paul says here that the confession is unto salvation, in the direction thereof.

On turning to the book of Acts we have an example of one confessing Christ. The record says that Philip joined himself to the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot and after having conversed over certain religious matters: "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing". (Acts 8:35-39). Please observe that upon learning the truth, the eunuch desired to obey it, but before his baptism he had to confess Christ as being the Son of God. This was not an exception: it was the rule, and if this man had to confess Christ then all others who desire to obey the Lord must do likewise.

The confession is a condition of salvation. It must be preceded by scriptural faith and repentance but followed by baptism for the remission of sins. (Heb. 11:6; Acts 2:38). If one left off the confession it would be impossible to obey the gospel of Christ, but upon making the good confession one is in position to complete his obedience to the truth through the act of baptism. Every condition, or every step in relation to the gospel, is important.

Now to the big question: Have you made the good confession? Won't you confess your faith in Christ in order that you might continue your obedience and be saved? If you have made that confession, may the Lord help you to live faithful to it all the days of your life; but on the other hand, if you have not as yet confessed Christ before

men then may you soon realize your duty before God and determine within your heart to do that which he had commanded. Yes, confess the Lord and if you will, one day he will confess you. Dear One, you'll never regret it and I beseech you to own the Christ before it is too late.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS DIVINE IN NAME

Louis Rushmore

THE CHURCH FOR WHICH Jesus died (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25), over which He is Head (Ephesians 5:23) and about which anyone can read in the Bible, is known by several biblical names. These names are divine in origin and always glorify God or Jesus Christ, with the possible exception of the simple term church (Matthew 16:16; Acts 2:47). Similarly, the New Testament records divinely given names for the members who comprise the church. Once the biblical names of the Lord's church and its members are learned, one can easily ascertain whether the names of contemporary churches and their members are divine or merely human in **origin**.

Biblical Names for the Church

In the strictest sense, the Lord's church has no name. Instead, the biblical names of the Lord's church to which reference is made herein are only descriptive terms. These terms describe the nature of the church or its relationship to God or Jesus Christ.

Commonly, names are used to identify one brand of the same or similar product from another brand. If there were only one of something, distinguishing names would not be necessary; the item would be just called what it is or by its association with its maker. This probably explains why the names "Kleenex" and "Q-Tips" became synonymous terms for tissues and cotton swabs, respectively; at one time they were either the first or dominate in their fields. In some parts of the country, folks may ask for "an Orange Coke" for the same reason.

Similarly, before the rise of the Catholic Church and denominationalism, biblically descriptive terms identified the one church without confusion. All these terms simply described the church or its relationship with its Maker. However, now

denominational brand names are used by the thousands to distinguish between the denominations and unintentionally also from the church of the Bible.

Hence, biblical names for the Lord's church are not brand names, whereas the many denominational names are brand names. The Lord died for and established only one (His) church (Matthew 16:18). Denominational names identify one brand of church from another and one brand of religion from another, instead of identifying the one true church of the Bible and simple New Testament Christianity.

The descriptive terms by which the Lord's church is biblically known include these: "**my church**" (Matthew 16:18), "**the church**" (Acts 2:47; 8:1), "**church of God**" (1 Corinthians 1:2), "**churches of Christ**" (Romans 16:16), "**body of Christ**" (Ephesians 4:12), "**church of the living God**" (1 Timothy 3:15), "**temple of God**" (1 Corinthians 3:16), **bride of Christ** (Ephesians 5:21-32; Revelation 22:17), "**kingdom of his dear Son**" (Colossians 1:13) and "**house of God**" (1 Timothy 3:15). Though wearing a divine name is a crucial, identifying mark of that one true divine church of the Bible, assuming a divinely authorized name alone is not the only characteristic of the Lord's church.

Biblical Names for Members of the Church

Throughout both testaments, various descriptive names are also applied to God's people. Many of these terms used in the Old Testament are also used in the New Testament. There is, though, a singularly different and new name given to the people of God in the New Testament

Terms used in the Old Testament and applied to God's people in the New Testament as well include: "**members**" (1 Corinthians 12:27), "**disciples**" (Acts 6:1; 20:7), "**believers**" (Acts 5:14), "**saints**" (Acts 9:13; 1 Corinthians 1:2), "**brethren**" (Romans 8:14) and "**children of God**" (1 John 3:1,2). Add also these terms: "**beloved of God**" (Romans 1:7), "**heirs of God**" (Romans 8:17) and "**royal priesthood**" (1 Peter 2:9).

There is yet another New Testament name for God's people that was the subject of prophecy long before its application. Isaiah taught that once the Gentiles gained admittance into the kingdom (church) and its blessings, all God's people would "be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isaiah 62:1,2; 56:5). After the admission of Cornelius and his household, the new name CHRISTIAN was given God's people (Acts 11:26). Used twice more in the New Testament (Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16), the term

Christian uniquely describes one's relationship to his Redeemer and serves as a perpetual reminder of Christ.

Conclusion

Every accountable soul should strive to be a Christian only with the full knowledge that only Christians comprise the Lord's divine church. Denominational names are human in origin and clutter the divine term Christian. There are no brand name Christians. One is either a Christian only, or he is not a faithful Christian!

Can We Really Live for Jesus?

Johnny Ramsey

THERE ARE THOSE WHO teach that it is not possible for human beings to live up to the standard of godliness that Christianity demands. The devil would like for us to accept that heresy so as to discourage us from even trying to live for God. Do we have certain propensities within us that prohibit a closer walk with God? Did our Creator make us with an inbuilt spiritual deficiency that makes it certain that we shall fail in our pursuit of holiness? Or, are there helps along the way that enable us to glorify the Savior? In the language of Rom. 4:3 we sincerely ask: *"What saith the Scriptures?"*

In the beauty of Psa. 119:76-80, we find some wonderful sources of consolation and joy: *"Let, I pray thee, thy lovingkindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live; for thy law is my delight. Let the proud be put to shame; for they have overthrown me wrongfully; but I will meditate on thy precepts. Let those that fear thee turn unto me; and they shall know thy testimonies. Let my heart be perfect in thy statutes, that I be not put to shame."* From this we take comfort in the following:

1. God's judgments are right
2. God's merciful kindness comforts
3. God's law is my delight
4. God's precepts are my meditation
5. My heart rejoices in His statutes.

Jesus taught, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt. 6:33).

Do you know why most of the world is lost? It hinges on Matt. 6:33. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, the vast majority

of people all over the world are seeking food, clothing and shelter first and putting God last. As a result, they don't come up very well on food, clothing and shelter! Jesus challenges us and gives us the best insurance policy ever issued, now or to the end of time, in Matt. 6:33. No many people take the Lord seriously on that promise. It is a tragedy how that high ethical standard is ignored!

We Have the Promise of Help from Heaven

It is challenging to live a life of purity and spiritual integrity, but we get substantial help from the God of heaven. When we live such a life we receive many benefits and blessings: God's promises, provisions, protection, providence, power, prayer and propitiation. Once these matters are explored in the sacred text, we can fully see that Jehovah has not asked us to do the impossible, but rather enables us to follow in the footprints of our Redeemer!

PROMISES. The wonderful promises of the gospel age surround us. Peter writes, *"Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue"* (2 Pet. 1:2-3). These promises encourage us to know that the Lord will never forsake us (Heb. 13:5) and will bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3), as long as we continue to walk with him.

PROVISIONS. When our lives are lives of purity and spiritual integrity, the Lord will provide us with all of our needs. James wrote, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights"* (James 1:17), and the apostle Paul added, *"And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:19).

PROTECTION. When we walk with God, we can look for and expect constant protection from above as long as the world stands: *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:20). He will be with us in all situations (Psa. 91) and provide avenues of escape, regardless of severe trials and the chicanery of the devil. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it"* (1 Cor. 10:13). The psalmist wrote, *"Our help is in the name of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth"* (Psa. 124:8).

PROVIDENCE. Those who live a life of spiritual purity and integrity

are in the hands of One who is able to deliver us (Dan. 3:17). While we are upheld by His arms, no harm can befall us: *"The eternal God is thy dwelling-place, And underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy from before thee"* (Deut. 33:27). Under His wings, we are kept safe: *"Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings"* (Psa. 17:8). In the constant care of God, we are continually sustained and granted peace and spiritual success (Isa. 26:3). We are caused to soar as eagles, regardless of earthly problems and human failures: *"But they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isa. 40:31).

POWER. The power of God motivates us to holiness and sanctity that gets the attention of an unbelieving world (Heb. 7:16). In Acts 4:13 we read of the reaction of unbelievers to the lives of the apostles: *"Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."* And the apostle Peter caps it all when he writes that we have *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* (1 Pet. 1:4-5).

PRAYER. The tremendous concourse of prayer keeps us close to the throne of God and gives us confidence. The Scriptures says, *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us"* (1 John 5:14). We understand that the door of heaven is always open to us when we ask according to the will of God: *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"* (Matt. 7:7).

PROPITIATION. The propitiation of the blood of Jesus Christ has the efficacy to cleanse us and to draw us near to the great reservoir of strength that motivates and cheers us on to higher ground. *"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:1-2). Those who teach that it is not possible for people to live up to the standard of godliness that Christianity demands are wrong. Yes, we can live the life the Bible sets forth because we get so much help from the

Savior. May we never turn back.

The Power of a Life of Purity

Christianity demands our very best because it is demonstrated by purity of life. The basic, fundamental values of the religion of Christ can best be seen in His life: *"One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin ... Him who knew no sin he made (to be) sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him"* (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor 5:21). It was said of Jesus, *"He went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38). So do His followers, because Christ *"suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). The same values seen in the life of Jesus are seen in the dedicated demeanor of His fervent disciples.

Too many times the world receives a faulty impression of the way of the cross because of our failure to portray the ethics of godliness. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, we learn anew of the intense value and power of a life that magnifies Christ and shares the message of the Redeemer with others (Phil. 1:20-21). Oh, what demands the gospel places upon devotees of the Savior! There is an enthralling stanza of a seldom-used gospel song that ought to ring in the ears of every Christian:

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity,
May His spirit divine, All my being refine,
Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.*

The Power of a Living Hope

Christianity is great because it brings hope, optimism and joy into the daily walk of children of the heavenly Father. Trusting in the Creator (Prov. 3:5), instead of earth's vain trinkets, gives us the enrichment that only the hope of heaven can bequeath to us. Hope includes faith, but it also is assurance. We have that because of the resurrection of Jesus: *"God ... begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Pet. 1:3).

Christians never look back to a life of sin, but ever press on to the beautiful home of the soul. As parents, we choose early in life to etch indelibly into the mural and fabric of our children's lives that we, *"Look for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God ... look for a better country, that is, a heavenly"* (Heb. 11:10,16).

*A careful man I ought to be,
A little fellow follows me.*

*I do not dare to go astray,
For fear he'll go the self-same way.*

Let us all rise up to meet the challenge of Christianity. With a firm commitment and deep resolve, we will one day, by the grace of God, when the saints go marching into glory, join in that heavenly chorus.

Misconceptions Concerning the Word of God and the Holy Spirit

D.R. Gnanasundaram

THERE ARE SOME WHO hold that the Holy Spirit guides and saves the sinner in a special and direct way. Certain others claim that they have been saved in some manner quite different from that outlined in the Scriptures. Such claims would make the Holy Spirit to contradict Himself and even, in a sense, make Him a liar.

The Holy Spirit Has Given the Word of God.—*"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).*

The Word of God Is Complete.—*"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).*

The Word of God Has Been Confirmed.—*"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward: how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:1-4).*

The Word of God Is Referred to as the Perfect Law of Liberty.—*"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).*

The Word of God Is Referred to as the Sword of the Spirit.—*"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).*

The Word of God Has Been Once Delivered.—*"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).*

The Word Will Be the Basis of the Judgment.—*"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).*

We thus see that the Holy Spirit has given us the Word which is complete, confirmed, and once delivered. Therefore no man can prophesy or reveal any truth from God. Further the Word is also referred to as the *"Sword of the Spirit"* and *"the perfect law of liberty."* This same Word will judge us in the last day. Therefore those who claim that they are guided in a mysterious way or by a direct communication from the Holy Spirit are in error, for the simple reason that the Holy Spirit does not operate in a way which is not in harmony with the Word already given by Him.

All men are saved in the same way, in accordance with the instructions given by the Holy Spirit in the inspired Word of God, and in no other way. God treats all men alike, as will be seen from the following verses: *"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). "For ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26-28).*

Further, God does not call one man in one way and another in still another way. He treats all people alike (Acts 10:34), and He calls all people in one way: *by the gospel, not by some "still, small voice."* *"Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:14).* Jesus Christ plainly said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life:*

no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This is the one and only way to God, completely and fully revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God.

We thus see from the foregoing Scriptures that:

- all men in every nation are called by God through His Word given by the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:14);
- the Word of God given by the Holy Spirit is a complete revelation from God (2 Peter 1:3);
- this Word given by the Holy Spirit will make man perfect (2 Timothy 3:16,17);
- the Word given by the Holy Spirit has been confirmed (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4);
- the Word given by the Holy Spirit has been once delivered (Jude 3);
- the Word given by the Holy Spirit will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

How To Study God's Word

Jerry Bates

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IS essential for anyone to be pleasing to God. While we should pray for wisdom (James 1:5), we cannot understand God's Word without study and meditation. Paul commended the Berean Christians in Acts 17:11 because they searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they were being taught was consistent with God's revealed Word. He further encouraged Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* Simply quoting Scripture is not handling the Word of God properly. After all, even Satan quoted Scripture (Matthew 4:6), but he misapplied it. What are some basic principles involved in properly understanding the Bible?

First, one must have the proper attitude: In John 7:17 Jesus said, *"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."* Thus, a desire to both know and do God's will is essential to properly understand God's Word. This is illustrated in John 8 where Jesus said that some unbelieving Pharisees were not able to understand His teaching because their prejudiced minds and hard hearts blinded them (8:43-44).

Second, one must understand the two major divisions of

the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament: A failure to understand this distinction has led to many false doctrines throughout the history of the church. God made a covenant with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. It is known as the Old Testament and contains God's dealings with the people of Israel, leading up to the coming of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, this first covenant was abolished and a new covenant was instituted, called the New Testament (Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 9:15-17). This new covenant is far superior because it brings forgiveness of sins, which the Old Covenant could never do (Hebrews 10:4). Therefore, the Old Testament no longer serves as our authority in matters of faith and practice, even though it continues to serve a useful purpose for our learning (Romans 15:4).

In order to understand a passage, one must also study the Bible in its context. The context would include several things such as the historical setting, the literary context, and the immediate context, which is a study of the verses immediately preceding or following the passage. One must also consider its type of literature. For example, Psalms is basically a book of poetry. Poetry is written in figurative and picturesque language. In Psalm 148:3 the psalmist calls upon the sun, moon, and stars to praise the Lord, figurative language. Because the Bible contains several different types of literature, it should be interpreted accordingly.

When studying a certain passage, one should ask several questions: Who is speaking, to whom is he speaking, and what is the situation involved? Jesus once told a rich ruler to go and sell all he had and give to the poor (Luke 18:22). One might conclude that everyone who would follow Jesus must do this. However, when we consider that these words were spoken to a man who loved riches more than God, we can conclude that we do not literally have to sell everything, but simply that we must love God more than anything, including riches.

The Sabbath Day was a command given specifically to the Jews on Mount Sinai, but the law of which it was a part was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). Therefore, it is no longer binding on Christians today. We must also remember that Christ lived as a faithful Jew, which explains why He observed the Sabbath Day.

In order to understand a particular doctrine, all related passages must be considered: No one verse teaches the entire truth about any subject. Thus, one must thoroughly study the Bible to determine God's complete teaching on a topic. For example, Romans 10:13 states, "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord

shall be saved." Reading this passage in isolation, we might conclude that, all one must do is verbalize God's name and he can be saved. However, we must also note other passages such as Acts 2:21, 38 and 22:16.

There are also several external aids that can help one to understand the Bible. Numerous **Translations of Scripture** can be compared (e.g., KJV, NKJV, ASV or NASV), which might help the understanding of a passage. What seems unclear in one translation might be clearer in another.

Another helpful tool is an **exhaustive concordance** [**Strong's Exhaustive Concordance** and **Young's Analytical Concordance**] which lists all the occurrences of a certain word in the Bible, enabling one to quickly do a topical study of specific words, people, or places. This also allows one to swiftly find a particular passage.

A **topical Bible** lists verses that relate to a general topic, such as "grace," "love," etc., enabling one to study all aspects of a topic. **Bible dictionaries** or **encyclopedias** can be valuable in defining biblical words, studying particular places or people, or giving some background information on a passage.

Commentaries—comments on a particular passage, written by a scholar who has done extensive study—are helpful, but one must remember that those are uninspired thoughts, and some viewpoints may be in error. Furthermore, these should never take the place of one's own study.

Bible study should be a lifelong process, and one should always endeavor to grow in strength and knowledge of God's will (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Three Names One Group of Men

Royce Frederick

SEVERAL DIFFERENT TERMS MAY be used to refer to one person. For example, one man may be referred to as "husband," "father," "son," "uncle," "brother," and "employee." All of these terms refer to the same person, but each term describes him from a different viewpoint.

In the New Testament, we find the three terms "elders," "bishops," and "pastors." All of these terms refer to the same group of men in the local church, but each term describes them from a different viewpoint.

They were called “**elders**” (Greek: *presbuteros*, sometimes translated “presbyters”) because they were selected from among the older men of the congregation. This refers to their age relationship to other members. It suggests experience and maturity.

They were called “**bishops**” (Greek: *episkopos*), which simply means “overseers.” This indicates their work relationship. They were responsible for overseeing the work and worship of the local church.

They were called “**pastors**” (Greek: *poimen*), which simply means “shepherds.” This refers to their care relationship to the other members. They were responsible for gently feeding and tending to the souls in the local church, just as shepherds care for sheep.

Several verses in the New Testament show that “elders,” “bishops,” and “pastors” all refer to the same group of men in the local church:

“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: ‘...Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:17-18, 28).

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3). See Titus 1:5,7.

The New Testament calls these men “elders” most often. The term “pastors” is used only once (Ephesians 4:11). These men were selected according to specific qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). They were appointed to their work by apostles and preachers (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

In the first century, each congregation was governed by two or more elders, men who were members of that local congregation. Deacons helped them as special servants of the church (see Acts 6:1-6; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

But men often love power (see 3 John 9; Matthew 20:20-28). Some churches began to be ruled by one man. By the second century, many churches were departing from the Lord’s way of governing. Local churches surrendered their independence and

began to be ruled in groups, with each group under one man. Eventually, men were able to exercise control over churches in large regions, and even among a plurality of nations.

If we desire to please the Lord, we must go back to the Bible. We must restore the pattern of the New Testament church by following all of His teachings, including the way the local church is governed.

What Is The Church Of Christ?

Bill Dillon

THE CHURCH OF THE Bible cannot be any part of a denomination. It is neither Catholic nor Protestant. It is the spiritual body of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Wherever Christ is preached and men believe in Him, repent, and are baptized into Christ, Christians are made (Acts 2:36-40). Wherever and whenever believers are obedient to the Gospel of Christ, they become members of the church of Christ.

Individuals then work with a local group of fellow Christians, and together they form a congregation of God's people. They are purely and simply Christians—**nothing more, less, or else!**

It is our task today to reproduce the New Testament order of things. We appeal for a restoration of the early church and the unity of all Christians.

The church of the Lord is the saved (Acts 2:47). The church (the body of Christ) is the **appointed place** for all the saved. In the days of the patriarch Noah, God put salvation in the ark (Genesis 6-9). When the floodwaters came, all human life not on the ark of safety was lost (1 Peter 3:20,21). Eight precious souls were delivered while the rest of the ungodly and disobedient multitudes were destroyed. In the time of the Great Deluge salvation was in the ark. And more, there was only one ark.

In the days of the lawgiver Moses, God placed salvation under, the blood of the Passover Lamb. The Lord told the Israelites to put the blood of the sacrificial lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. The Lord's assurance was, "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*" (Exodus 12:13). During the long night that followed in Egypt, the death of the first-born of each house took place where the blood was not found. God was clear in His meaning and true to His Word in putting salvation or deliverance under the blood of the Lamb.

In the New Testament age of Bible time God has, as He has in

the past, specified salvation in a certain place. Today, salvation is in the church, as stated in Acts 2:47, "*The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*"

Truly, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

But I Did Obey

Jack W. Carter

THESE WERE THE WORDS of King Saul when he returned from his mission to destroy the Amalakites and Samuel asked him why he had not obeyed the voice of the Lord.

Saul was telling the truth up to a point. But the real point was that he had not obeyed the voice of God in everything.

In this particular instance, Saul and his men had kept some of the animals and the "choice things" as spoil. This violated the specific instructions from God that clearly outlined how Saul and his army were to completely destroy every living creature of the Amalakites.

How is it that Saul came to reason in such a way? He seemed to conclude that obeying *the major thrust* of God's direction was the only really important requirement. Disobeying God in one or two trivial matters seemed to be nothing really important.

Saul lost his kingdom because he entertained such reasoning. I am convinced that in the day of judgment, many people will stand beside Saul to lose much more than a kingdom and for the same reason.

Partial obedience is really no obedience at all. For whatever reason—whether we feel that the little things get in the way of what we want for ourselves, or we did obey in ignorance—we will eventually learn that God will no more accept disobedience from us than He did from King Saul. The problem is, we may learn it too late.

Let God Do the Clapping!

Bobby Duncan

FROM TIME TO TIME a question arises concerning the practice of clapping during our worship periods, to show our approval of something said or done. This practice is, generally speaking, relatively new among churches of Christ. That fact within itself does not make the practice either right or wrong.

Neither does the fact that it is a practice borrowed by our denominational neighbors from the entertainment industry, and then by churches of Christ from our denominational neighbors. The rightness or wrongness of an act is determined, not by its antiquity or its novelty, nor by who has or has not made it a practice, but by whether or not it is in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament.

Clapping during worship fits into the agenda of those who are trying to *change the church*. Some of them have made it plain that they feel that worship must be changed to make it more appealing to the worshipper. One brother wrote, "I also believe we should let individuals and congregations use the musical format they like without judging them." Another said, "The tired uninspiring event we call worship in traditional churches has to give way to the exhilarating experience of God that exhibits and nourishes life in the worshippers." He also said in the same speech, "The church has got to change. If it doesn't change, my kids are not going to stay with it."

These statements suggest that worship must please the worshipper. They ignore the fact that worship is designed to honor God. When the design of worship is to entertain the worshipper, we expect those being entertained to show their approval by clapping.

There is the same authority for clapping in Christian worship as there is for playing a piano or organ—None—in the New Testament. So, to do either of these things is to do something for which there is no divine approval. Furthermore, those among our brethren who first started clapping in worship are the same ones who have stretched the tent of fellowship over the denominational world, and who will not say that those who use the instrument in worship sin in so doing. While clapping has now caught on with some who would not yet fellowship denominations or bring a piano into the building, it should be remembered that hand-clapping in

worship was originally borrowed from the denominations by some who believe those in denominations have God's approval.

Who is being applauded when there is hand-clapping in worship? Are those who clap their hands doing so to honor God? If so, they are seeking to honor God in some way He has not authorized, instead of how He has directed. *"God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24).

If hand-clapping is something of value in our worship, then why didn't God prescribe it? Could it be that those who initiated this practice think they have thought of something good that God overlooked? Or, did God simply not know of its great value? Brethren with such wisdom would do well to read First Corinthians 3:18-20, *"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And, again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."*

Those really interested in the peace and harmony of the church will not insist on clapping in worship. They themselves will agree that clapping is not necessary in order to have scriptural worship. They will acknowledge also that clapping is not an act God has prescribed. Therefore, they must confess they can worship scripturally and conscientiously without applauding. In love for those who conscientiously oppose it, and in the interest of peace and harmony, it should be omitted.

Occasionally one will be heard to say that hand clapping is no different from saying, "Amen". But there is one slight difference: saying "Amen," is authorized in scripture: 1 Corinthians 14:16, *"Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?"* Where is the verse which sanctions clapping hands in worship?

I would emphasize that I am not one who is opposed to change, provided the change is in harmony with the will of God, and provided the change will be an improvement. However, if we are to improve our worship, it will not be by adding other acts, but by improving the worshippers.

If there is to be applause in connection with our worship, let it be by God; He is the only audience. All of us are participants.

AUTHORIZED MUSIC FOR NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

Reggie Gnanasundaram

WHEN ONE CONSIDERS HOW his life is to be governed in matters of religion or religious service to God, the source of authority must be established. With regards to Christianity there can be only one authority, and that is the New Testament scripture. The Scriptures alone are the inspired word of God. Therefore, when we attempt to determine what is or is not acceptable to Him, the scriptures become His voice of authority. Opinion loses its power if opposed or unsupported by scripture.

Over the years the church of Christ has stood firm in its conviction that the scriptures do authorize vocal music in worship to God, and that this position can be supported from scripture. However, the use of instrumental music in worship is not found to be authorized in the New Testament, nor is there an example of the New Testament church engaging in such in its worship service. Does God want only vocal music? Does He want vocal music accompanied by an instrument, or **does it really matter?** The key is, what do the scriptures say?

Instrumental music in itself is not improper. It is only when it is used in relationship with church worship that we have a problem. Why? Because mechanical music is never commanded or exemplified for use in the worship of the New Testament church. The matter becomes quite simple when considered solely from the Biblical viewpoint.

Reasons To Sing

The purpose of singing is clearly defined. First, as Christians we are **commanded** to sing. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God"* (Colossians 3:16). Paul's command to the church was **to teach and admonish one another by singing.**

Another purpose of our singing is **to praise and glorify God:** *"...Singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19). God is to be the object of our praise through song.

Another reason to sing is for **joy:** *"Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise"* (James 5:13).

The joy of salvation should stir our souls to sing.

Instrumental Music In The Old Testament

In the Old Testament it is quite obvious that instrumental music was authorized and used in worship to God. One passage, among many, that establishes this fact is: *"And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps ... for so was the commandment of the Lord ... and Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering ... and when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also ... and all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished"* (2 Chronicles 29:25-28).

This passage makes it crystal clear that God approved of the use of instrumental music in worship. However, this was for a worship service conducted under **the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses**, which has since been done away with in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14; Romans 7:4-6).

Did you notice that the worshippers, as described in the passage in 2 Chronicles 29, were also offering animal sacrifices? Do those who would use this passage to authorize instrumental music in worship today also advocate and practice the offering of burnt offerings, in order to be consistent?

As a matter of fact, in each reference to music in the New Testament with regard to the church and its worship, the only specification is for vocal music. If in the Old Testament the use and authorization of instrumental music was so obvious and plain as in the above cited passage, isn't it a bit strange that, if God were *indifferent* to the continued use of instrumental music in worship to Him, there is not even one command or example for its use?

Vocal Music In The New Testament

- *"And when they had **sung a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives"* (Mark 14:26).
- *"And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: 'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And **sing to Your name**'"* (Romans 15:9).
- *"What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also **sing with the understanding**"* (1 Corinthians 14:15).
- *"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing and making melody in your heart to the***

Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord**" (Colossians 3:16).
- "Saying: 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will **sing praise to You**'" (Hebrews 2:12).
- "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him **sing psalms**" (James 5:13).

What is obvious in each New Testament passage is **the command to sing**. Nowhere is there a command or example of instrumental music accompanying the singing in a worship assembly of the church in the New Testament. When God, by inspiration of the scriptures, commanded vocal music, all other kinds of music were excluded. The same principle is true concerning the emblems of the Lord's Supper. By directing the use of the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, Jesus excluded the use of anything else. He did not have to say, "Do not use fish," or "Do not use milk," or "Do not use anything else." By stating exactly what is to be used, He automatically excluded everything else. By directing us to sing, all other forms of music were eliminated.

Evidence From History

It is also interesting to note that, from the historical standpoint, most all scholars from virtually every denomination agree that the church of the first century practiced vocal music only in its worship services. No one knows exactly when instrumental music was first introduced into the worship, but some scholars feel that it may have been as late as the seventh or eighth centuries. Interesting also is the history of the expression "A Capella", which has come to stand today for vocal music only. Originally it meant "as it is done in the churches." What does this say to us about the music of the Lord's church, as it was formed in the hands of the apostles under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit? The whole question comes down to one of authority. **Does the New Testament authorize any music for worship other than vocal music?** The answer, from the viewpoint of scripture, is obviously a definite and positive, NO!

Declarations Of Religious Leaders Condemning The Use Of Musical Instruments

John Calvin, outstanding as one of the founders of the Presbyterian church: "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the

lighting up of lamps, the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews." **John Calvin's Commentary, Thirty-third Psalm.**

Adam Clarke, the greatest commentator of all time among the Methodists: "Music as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity." **Clarke's Commentary, Vol. IV, p. 686.**

John Wesley, the reputed founder of the Methodist Church, is quoted by Adam Clarke to have said, "I have no objections to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither seen nor heard." **Clarke's Commentary, Vol. IV, p. 686.**

Martin Luther, a distinguished reformer, "Called the organ the ensign of Baal." **McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia, Music, Vol. VI, p. 762.**

Charles H. Spurgeon, recognized as the greatest Baptist preacher that ever lived, preached for twenty years to thousands of people weekly in the Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle, London, England, did not have musical instruments in the worship. **M.C. Kurfees, Instrumental Music in the Worship, p. 196.**

Conybeare and Howson, famous scholars of the Church of England, in commentary on Ephesians 5:19, say, "Make melody with the music of your hearts, to the Lord let your songs be, not the drinking of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns; and their accompaniment, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart." **Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Vol. 11, p. 408.**

Frequently the Psalmist David is quoted to justify the use of musical instruments in worship of God. David not only used musical instruments but he also danced (Psalm 150:4), he had many wives, he burned incense, offered animal sacrifices, observed feast days, and did many other things according to the laws given through Moses.

Today, we do not do any of these things merely because David did them, so why should we follow him in the use of mechanical music in worship, particularly when it violates what the Holy Spirit specifically asked of worshippers? Jesus—not David—is certainly our authority for all that we do in Christian worship (Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 1:12, Galatians 1:8,9).

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