

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

There Is Only One True God

ALTHOUGH WE CAN LEARN about God through what we see around us, as the Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1). But to know God, who He is, His nature, His attributes one must go to the Bible; the book of God’s written word. Through the Bible God has not only revealed that He is the Creator of the universe and man, but He has also revealed Himself to man and His will for man. The English word “God” is derived from an “Indo-European” root found in the Germanic languages; the basic meaning is to call or invoke, and indicates a Supreme Being who is the object of worship. But in Hebrew, the language in which the first part of the Bible was originally written, the word “Elohim” is used for God. “Elohim” is a plural masculine noun. This plural name of God, in Hebrew, which speaks of Him as many, though He is one, is found throughout the Old Testament. When God, for instance, in the beginning created man, it says, “Then God said, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26). Here the Deity spoke, and He referred to Himself as “US.” The same is true in Genesis 3:22 and 11:7, and in other passages.



This plural idea of God, in Hebrew language, which speaks of Him as many, though He is one, is darkly intimated in the Old Testament, yet clearly revealed in the New Testament, as God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This does not, however, mean that there are three different Gods. The Bible clearly and firmly declares that there is but only one true God, as we read in Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6;

1 Corinthians 8:4. According to the Bible, there is only one Deity, only one Being, who is called God, but in that one Godhead there are three distinct personalities in that one essence. In substance He is one. God is Spirit. (John 4:24). When the Bible speaks of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as God, this does not mean that there are three Beings or three Deities, but it means there are three personalities in one substance, each being co-equal. The co-equality of the three Persons of the Godhead is seen in the fact that the Father sent the Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the world (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 10); and the Son, after accomplishing the work of man's salvation, when He returned to the glory which He had with the Father, before the world was, sent the Holy Spirit of God to His apostles to apply His redemption to all men. (John 14:25, 26; 16:12, 13; Acts 2:1-4).

In the gospel according to John, in John 1:1-3 we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." So the Word, who was God, was with God. He was God, but yet He was with God. This clearly shows that the "Godhead", (Colossians 2:9; Romans 1:20), or the "Divine Nature" (Acts 17:29), is made up of more than one Personalities. Further, in John 1:14, it says, "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." It was the Word, who was with God, and was God, who became flesh, a Man. The same was called Jesus Christ, or the anointed Savior of the world. Speaking of Jesus, the apostle Paul wrote, "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:6-8).

In the Scripture we just read, it says of the Word, that all things were made through Him. Yet Genesis 1:1 reads, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This clearly shows the oneness that exists between the Father and the Son. Also, Isaiah 44:6 says, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel; and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.'" Then at Revelation 1:17 we hear Jesus saying, "Do not be afraid: I am the First and the Last." From these statements we learn, that as the Father is eternal, so is the Son eternal. And the same is true of the Holy Spirit, the third Personality of the Godhead, concerning whom we read, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered

Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (Hebrews 9:14). The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Personalities of the Godhead, but together are one Deity, one essence. Knowledge of this fact helps us to understand why Christ, when He was returning back to heaven, commanded His disciples in the beginning concerning the gospel: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:18, 19). He did not say “in the names of ...” as of three different ones, but “in the name of” The name carries the idea of authority or power. It is the power of God that saves man, when man obeys God’s command. (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1Peter 3:21). W.E. Vine, in his well-known book, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, concerning name says, “For all that a name implies, of authority, character, rank, majesty, power, excellence, etc. of everything that the name covers.” The baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is the baptism which is by the authority of the triune God.

All through the Scriptures the unity and the distinctiveness of the three Spiritual Personalities of the Godhead are clearly evident. Even today, the Father is in control of the world, and the Son is the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), and the Holy Spirit is involved in convincing men of sin through the preaching of the Gospel.

WORK OF THE CHURCH

J.C. Choate



WHAT IS THE WORK OF the church? Surely there is some purpose behind its existence. It must have a function, or a work to do. It does. However, it is not the work of the church to go into business, thus buying and selling for profit. The work of the church does not consist of entering the employment business, hiring everyone who wants to preach and sending them out. The church is not in the business of giving away everything that it can obtain just for the sake of giving it away. It is not the work of the church to go into the school business and thus operate schools all over the country. These things we have mentioned are certainly important and must be considered but they are not the first obligation of the Lord’s body. Yes, the church has a work to do but it is not always that which many think it is.

The work of the church is the greatest work in all the world. It is the only institution that can do it, and, as a result, glorify God of heaven. This is the work the Lord has ordained that the church should do, and to try to do it through some other means is purely out of harmony with the will of God, or just failing to do it will result in his disapproval.

The work of the church is really twofold. First, it is to preach the gospel that souls may be saved, and second it is to help the poor and those in need. Aside from these two functions the church is not primarily obligated.

Let's begin by noticing first of all the duty of the church to preach the gospel. Christ himself said in the great commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). In Matthew's record of this same commission he says that the Lord said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). So this is the chief duty of the church, that is, to go. We are to go into all the world, to every nation, and finally to every creature, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ that souls might be saved.

The Lord didn't say how we should go, but he did say go. He didn't give a particular method of preaching the gospel, but he did say to preach the gospel. Note, we are not to teach opinions, the doctrines of men, etc., but only the gospel. We may preach it in the pulpit, by tracts, through the newspaper, by a correspondence course, by radio, by television, or in many other ways, but regardless of the way we choose, we are to preach the gospel in its purity. Paul said in II Timothy 4:2 that we are to preach the word. Preach what? Only the word of God.

Everything the church does, every good work performed, every sermon, yes everything, is done with the thought in mind of saving souls. And that is why we are to preach the gospel. We are to do it in order that our souls may be saved and in order that other souls might be saved. We are saved in order that we might help to save others, and so it goes with all Christians.

The work of the church doesn't stop here, and verily the next phase is simply a continuation of the first part. The church is to be instrumental in helping those in need. When the Lord was on the earth he was continually concerned about the poor and those in need of help and he would have us to be likewise concerned. If we ever get to the place that we do not care about others or that we are not concerned about their needs then surely we do not have the spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9).

Now in helping others we must strive to help those who are truly in need and those who are deserving (I Timothy 5). Otherwise, it is possible

to spend all of one's time in helping those who are not worthy, for some people are all too willing to take advantage of the goodness of the church.

The church can do just so much. That is, it can help only as it has the means and the ability to help. But whenever possible, food should be provided for the hungry, clothes to cover the naked and cold, and shelter for those who are left outside. Such help also includes caring for the sick and afflicted, seeing after the homeless and the aged. For James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Each man should first remember that it is his obligation before God to provide the best he is able for himself and for his family. Then if help must be received, the church can make up what is lacking (I Timothy 5:8). Someone has said that you can't get an individual interested in spiritual matters as long as he is hungry, cold, and in dire need of the material things. Surely this is true and this is one reason why the church seeks to do this type of work. We are concerned about the physical body but we are more concerned about the spiritual being.

Remember, the Lord would have all to be saved. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But man can be saved only as he has the opportunity to hear the gospel and obey it. Whether it be through preaching a sermon or helping the poor, the truth is being proclaimed. This is the work of the church.

APPROACHING OUR HIGH PRIEST

HEBREWS 4:15-16

Cliff Stewart

Introduction

1. Historical overview

- A. At the time the Book of Hebrews was written, the church stood at the threshold of major persecution.
- B. A strong Jewish element in the church was leading the Hebrew brethren toward apostasy (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:23-29).
- C. Some were deserting their faith at the time they needed it most (Hebrews 10:35-39).

2. Text Analyzed (Hebrews 4:15-16).

- A. We have an High Priest.
- B. Characteristics of this High Priest noted.

C. Based upon these facts we should:

1. Hold fast our profession.
2. Draw near to our High Priest.

I. Jesus is our High Priest:

- A. He fulfills many roles in the church: head of the body; king of the kingdom; high priest of the Temple.
- B. The only one ever! (Hebrews 7:22-25). After the order of Melchizedec, He is:
1. The only one of His kind (no predecessors, no successors).
 2. Both a king and priest at the same time (Zechariah 6:13; Hebrews 7:1).
- C. Enthroned in heaven (Hebrews 8:1-2), not on earth as Levites and modern pretenders. Serves not in temples made with hands (Hebrews 9:11,12).

II. Characteristics of our High Priest:

- A. Can be touched (sympathetic with our problems).
1. The multitude in Matthew 14:14.
 2. The widow at Nain in Luke 7:13.
 3. Over the city of Jerusalem in Luke 19:43.
 4. At the graveside of Lazarus in John 11:33.
- B. Was tempted “in all points” as we.
1. We are tempted through lust of eye, lust of flesh, pride of life (1 John 2:15-17).
 2. The devil tried all three on Jesus in Matthew **4:1-11**.
 3. Having been tempted, He is able to succor us (Hebrews 2:14-18).
- C. Yet, He was without sin (1 Peter 2:22,23; Hebrews 7:26-28).

III. We are urged to draw near:

- A. “Boldly” (not rudely, audaciously, not imprudently, but confidently, wholly assured). Note Hebrews 10:22.
1. Approach Him not as fearful slaves (Romans 8:15).
 2. Approach confidently as respectful children.
- B. That we may obtain “mercy” and find “grace.”
1. “Grace” is getting what we don’t deserve.
 2. “Mercy” is not getting what we do deserve.
 3. These are our only hope for salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5).
- C. To receive help in time of need.
1. All have needs of some kind.
 2. His willingness to give to us (Matthew 7:7-11; Romans 8:28).

Conclusion: All things work together for good to those who “love God.”

1. Those who love God obey Him (1 John 2:4,5; John 14:15,21,23,24).
 2. God’s purpose in our calling is that we might receive the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).
 3. We are called by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14).
 4. Let us then draw near to our High Priest through obedience to the commands of the Gospel.
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Key Questions About Baptism

Ken Tyler

1. IS BAPTISM A BURIAL, Sprinkling or Pouring? Paul made it plain in two different passages that baptism is a burial. Paul asked the Romans, “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are **buried** with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:3,4). He also said in Colossians 2:12, “*buried with him (Christ) in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*” Paul said baptism is a burial. He could not have meant sprinkling or pouring.

2. Who is to be Baptized? Those who are able to understand and believe. Phillip asked the Eunuch, “*...understandest thou what thou readest?*” (Acts 8:30). By asking this question, Phillip pointed out that a person must be able to understand before he can obey. Jesus said, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ...*” (Mark 16:16). It should be obvious that a mentally retarded person or a small child cannot understand and believe. They are not accountable to God because their minds are not developed where they can understand and believe the Gospel.

3. What is the Purpose of Baptism? On the day the church began, Peter told people who asked what to do to be saved to “*...repent, and be baptized... for the remission of sins....*” (Acts 2:38). We must conclude that individuals are baptized “*... for the remission of sins....*” To teach that a person can be saved and be a Christian without baptism is a misunderstanding of Bible baptism. Remember, Jesus said, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved....*” (Mark 16:16). Notice that our Savior did not put salvation before baptism. Peter also said in 1 Peter 3:21, “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us... .*” How can this statement be true if baptism is not absolutely

necessary for salvation? The New Testament teaches that baptism is "... *for the remission of sins*. . . ."

What have we said? (1) Baptism is a burial; (2) Those who are able to understand and believe are to be baptized; and (3) Baptism is for the remission of sins. Have you been scripturally baptized?

WHO ARE THOSE CHRISTIANS, AND WHY DO THEY STUDY THE BIBLE?

Keith Sisman

THIS QUESTION IS SURPRISINGLY easy to answer. The term Christian is first used three times in the Bible by Luke and Peter, and therefore dates back nearly two thousand years (Acts 11:26, 26:28 and 1 Peter 4: 16).

We soon realize from the Bible that the term Christian is used of somebody who is *in Christ*, and therefore *of Christ*. That person is somebody that through faith has obeyed Christ in baptism and continues in faith and action to live life as a Christian. This term, therefore, belongs to the Bible, being used by writers inspired of God. It is not a term created by man.

The term 'Christian' cannot be scripturally used by somebody who merely wishes to be called a Christian but who has not obeyed God. In the world today, as in the past, many people call themselves Christians who have no right to do so. Usually by choice they have not studied the Scriptures. In not obeying the Gospel, they have rejected the call of God and salvation (Acts 2:38).

Today there are thousands of different so-called Christian denominations who propagate many totally different views on biblical questions. But there is only one doctrine, one true way, one true church to whom any Christ-centered Christian will be added by God *after* baptism (Acts 2:47).

The Bible speaks of Christians being a spiritual people (1 Peter 2:4-12), those who are in Christ and therefore in His church, having rejected the ways of the world. Denominations or divisions are spoken against in the Scriptures and are not of God but are of the world (1 Corinthians 1:10,11).

Christians are sometimes accused of worshipping the Bible. This particular charge is often aimed at those people who wish to share their joy of being in Christ with those who have not yet found the truth

and who will live eternally without God if they die in that condition (Mark 16:15,16). Christians worship the true God, (Matthew 28:19) not the Bible.

It has been nearly two thousand years since the deaths of those who were able to live with Jesus and to touch Him. The nearest we can get to Christ is to listen to His inspired Apostles through their writings, in the Bible. When Christians earnestly search the Scriptures it is to find Christ and his teachings. By knowing His teachings we can know Christ, we can obey Him, putting our faith in Him. We can be 'in Christ' where there is salvation. We do not worship the Bible but we worship Almighty God Himself and Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son (Romans 10: 14-17, Titus 2:13, Matthew 4:10).

WHO IS RIGHTEOUS?

Cecil May, Jr.

WHO IS RIGHTEOUS? *"There is no one righteous, no, not one"* (Romans 3:10). All have sinned, and **sinner** is the opposite of **righteous one**. To claim to be righteous is to ignore what we know of ourselves, as well as to deny the Word of God.

This answer is found in a context in which the discussion centers around how a person may be "declared righteous" by God. Theoretically, any who are righteous, that is, who have never sinned, are justified. But sinners are condemned, not justified. To be justified on the basis of one's own deeds, therefore, one would have to have never sinned. Since *"all have sinned"* (Romans 3:23), no one is justified that way. In that sense, *"There is no one righteous."*

If we think we keep God's law well enough to justify ourselves by it, we blind ourselves to our faults, or boil the law down just to outward rites we can scrupulously keep. According to Jesus, some Pharisees did both (Matthew 23). Paul also spoke of those who *"set out to establish their own righteousness"* and did not humbly seek by faith the righteousness that comes only to those who know they need it as sinners (Romans 10:3).

If we trust in ourselves that we are righteous, we miss the only means of justification for sinners (Luke 18:9-14), trusting God for justification by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1-3).

WHO IS RIGHTEOUS? *"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous... Whoever does not do righteousness is not of God"* (1 John 3:7,10). Whoever

claims to be born of the righteous One is righteous or else belies the claim. If we are unrighteous in our daily conduct, we do not know the righteous God.

This answer is found in a context in which certain antichrists are declared to be false in their claim that our relationship to God is a matter of spirit only, and it does not matter how we live in the flesh. John reminds us that to know and be born of God is to keep His commandments (1 John 3:24), walk as He walked (1 John 2:6), and be righteous as He is righteous (1 John 2:29).

To convince ourselves that the choice between righteous and unrighteous living makes no difference at all in our relationship to God, we must ignore most of the Bible, particularly the teachings of Jesus. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). *“If you love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). *“This do, and you shall live”* (Luke 10:28).

If we walk in sin and iniquity we are lost, whatever we may profess of faith or doctrine.

WHO IS RIGHTEOUS? These two answers approach the question from different standpoints. Both truths are essential to know and to live by. If we say we know God but there is no significant difference in our lives, we may deceive ourselves, but we do not deceive God (Galatians 6:7). If we think the difference in our lives is so great and so much of our own doing that we are thereby righteous, we exalt ourselves and will be humbled by God (Matthew 23:12).

Preaching The Way

E. Claude Gardner

AT LEAST SIX TIMES in the book of Acts, Luke refers to Christianity as *“the way.”* When Paul described his religion he declared, *“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers ...”* (Acts 24:14). Luke also uses this expressive word “way” in Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:22.

A reading of these passages shows that four actions were expressed toward the way as follows: (1) membership in the way; (2) persecution of the way; (3) worship according to the way; (4) taught or preached the way. It is the purpose of this lesson to stress the necessity and importance of preaching the way.

WHAT IS *THE WAY*?

The way is the Christian system; it is *the way* of true worship; and it is *the way* of living. Adam Clarke comments on Acts 9:2 as follows, "... this religion, ...*the way* of the Lord, implies the *whole* of worship due to him, and pre-scribed by himself: the *way* or path in which he wills men to walk, that they may get safely through life, and finally attain everlasting felicity. The Jewish writers designate the whole doctrine and practice of Christianity...."

Christianity is the way of life, the way of salvation, the way of service, and the way of hope. It is through the way we enjoy life here and eternal life in the world to come (see 1 Peter 3:10-12; John 10:10; Luke 19:10; 1 John 2:25).

Communism, socialism, and other ideologies are accepted by millions as ways of living, but the way of Christ is the way all men ought to go. Christianity should be viewed as that which governs and influences us in every facet of our existence. Christian principles should govern us in the home, in recreation, at work, in the church, and in society. Christianity must not be a form or ritual divorced from our everyday living.

WHAT IS PREACHING *THE WAY*?

When one preaches the way, he preaches Christ and the Gospel. Several expressions found in the Bible mean the same and indicate what we are bound to preach. When we preach the way:

1. We preach Christ. Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans and to the eunuch (Acts 8:5,12,35). Christ our salvation should be our theme, for He is the way (Acts 2:22; John 14:6). We must not preach ourselves, our opinions, doubts, personal desires, or hobbies (see 1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:5).

2. We preach the church. In Samaria Philip, who preached Jesus, is said to have preached the church or "*the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ*" (Acts 8:12). We cannot preach the way without declaring the nature and value of the New Testament church. Christ and the church are inseparables (see Ephesians 5:32; Acts 28:23,31).

3. We preach the Gospel. Jesus has commissioned us to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15, see also 1 Corinthians 9:16). Paul was an educated man, yet he preached the Gospel (Galatians 1:11,12). It is our privilege to bless the world with "*the good news*" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

4. We preach the truth. "Truth," like "way," is a comprehensive word that conveys the whole of Christianity. We are to speak "*the truth in love*" (Ephesians 4:15). The truth makes us free (John 8:32; 1 Peter 1:22).

5. We preach the Word. We are commanded by Paul to preach the Word, and by Peter to speak as the oracles of God (2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 4:11). A command is not a request or a suggestion. Inspiration puts a limit on what we shall preach.

6. We preach the preaching of God. When Jehovah commissioned the prophet Jonah to cry against wicked Nineveh, He charged him to *“preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee”* (Jonah 3:2). Whatever has come from God we must be careful to proclaim without addition or subtraction, and without fear or favor (Acts 20:26,27; Galatians 1:8,9; 2 John 9).

WHY SHOULD WE PREACH THE WAY?

We go forth under the banner of Jesus, the “captain” of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), preaching to the world. We do this because we have already been saved through preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21). The Gospel believed and obeyed results in salvation (Mark 16:15,16). Paul wrote that the Gospel is *“the power of God unto salvation”* (Romans 1:16). It is powerful enough to reform lives, destroy sin, insure peace, save a city, and change the world.

The world is lost, and we should feel the weight of evangelizing the world (Romans 3:23; John 4:35).

“The Gospel to the whole world in our generation” is not an idle dream. Motivated by love, faith, and hope, we can accomplish what the Savior asked us to do. When Moses hesitated to lead Israel, God promised, *“Certainly I will be with thee”* (Exodus 3:12). Likewise, we feel our insufficiency and limitation of resources, but if we do our utmost to preach the Gospel to every creature, the Lord will be with us *“always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20).

ADMONISH THOSE WHO ACCEPT THE WAY

In our efforts to induce sinful man to accept the way we should admonish him to continue his *“walk circumspectly”* (Ephesians 5:15). One should enter the way and remain in the way that *“leadeth unto life”* (Matthew 7:14). In our conduct we should be reminded that to be a Christian is to walk in the *“way of holiness”* (Isaiah 35:8). Also, in our walk we should constantly seek the *“old paths”* (Jeremiah 6:16).

When I follow the path of the Lord, where will I go? What way will I follow? It will be in the path of righteousness (Psalm 23:3); in the path of love (1 John 4:19); in the path of faith (Hebrews 11:6); and in the path of service (Matthew 23:11,12).

May we preach the way so effectively, fervently, and faithfully that the lost of the earth can be the redeemed of heaven. *“... Lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:24).

THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

John Thiesen

EVER SINCE THE FALL OF Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been separated from God by sin. It is this separation which has created the need for a priesthood to represent us to God.

Priests Are Mediators

A priest is a mediator who stands between God and sinners. His job, from the earliest times, has been to offer up sacrifices to God in order to make propitiation for sinners and to pray on their behalf to God. For example, Moses' brother Aaron was a priest. Every year, when offering up the sacrificial atonement animals both for himself and for all Israel, he laid his hands on the scapegoat and confessed all the sins of Israel before releasing it to carry the iniquity of the nation into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21). No one could take this priestly authority to himself, but only those called by God for the purpose. *"And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron"* (Hebrews 5:4). Among the Jews, only Aaron and his sons were set aside for this holy work. It was important that the priest be a merciful person in order properly to approach God on behalf of others.

Even before God set up the Israelite nation, he had priests operating in the world. Melchizedek, for example, who came out to bless Abraham following his victory over the kings, was called *"the priest of the most high God"* (Genesis 14:18). During that same pre-law period, Moses' father-in-law was known as "the priest of Midian" and offered sacrifices to God with Moses, suggesting he may have been a priest authorized by God (Exodus 3:1; 18:12).

God's Priesthood Today

Our High Priest today is Jesus Christ the Son of God, *"set on the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens"* (Hebrews 8:1). At God's right hand, *"he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Hebrews 7:25). The sacrifice He offered for our sins was His own blood on the cross. This supreme sacrifice of Himself supersedes all previous sacrifices offered in the world, which were only a shadow of His. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:14).

Under Christ their High Priest, all Christians function as sub-priests, *"an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 2:5). These spiritual sacrifices consist of:

(1) Praise and thanks of our lips; (2) Doing good to others; (3) Sharing with those in need (Hebrews 13:15,16); and making intercession by prayer for all people and authorities (1 Timothy 2:1,2).

Paying The Price

Salvador B. Cariaga

“PAYING THE PRICE.” That was the headline on the foreign section of a newspaper last week. The story is about Katherine Ann Power, who joined the Anti-Vietnam Movement as a college student, but went far beyond demonstrating to engage in violent crime. Ms. Power drove the get-away car in a 1970 bank robbery in which a police officer was killed. For 23 years she had been a fugitive until she turned herself in last month. Judge Robert Banks sentenced Ms. Power to 8-12 years in prison and directed that she may not earn any profit from books and movies related to her crime.

Two years ago, a man in California was arrested for a murder he committed 28 years ago. He freely roamed around until high-tech and modern police gadgets caught up with him. The DNA in his hair, along with his finger print, matched that of the wanted murderer. When confronted, he readily confessed.

The Bible tells us that sin costs. It's not free: “For the wages of sin is death. . .” The consequences of it are not erased by time. Some people might think people will forget, time will heal, but not with God and not with sin. Neither can anyone hide from it. Distancing yourself by traveling afar will not help you escape from the sin you have committed. It will follow you to the ends of the earth. Finally, you cannot pay for your sins. Your church contribution may help support the preachers, the poor or proclaim the gospel, but it has nothing to do with the payment of your sins. You may be able to bribe your way out of past troubles with some people or institutions, but not this one.

So, you may ask, “How do I pay my debt to God?” You can't. But someone can. In fact, he already did. You're not off the hook yet, though. First, you need to **believe**. Believe in whom? Believe in Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God, that He came to save you from sin, that you may be saved. Second, you need to **repent**. Jesus said that if you do not repent, you will die. You much regret and have remorse over your past sins. You are a sinner and you need to be sorry for that. Paul declared: “*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*” Denial in this case, which is one of our defensive weapons, will rob us of God's forgiveness. Third, you must accept Christ in **baptism**. Paul, Peter and

the rest of the New Testament Christians all taught and practiced water baptism (See Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:4; Acts 8:38; just to name a few).

After you have done those things, then you have been born again. You have accepted the grace of God in your life. You have become a child of God, a **Christian**. That is not the end of it. It is just the beginning of a wonderful relationship with God. Great things await you. Walk with God. Continue to love Him and serve Him and you will **grow**. May God bless you.

BAPTISM

Bobby Key

IF ONE COMES TO REALIZE he is lost in sin, if he has been taught the Gospel, if he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, and if he has fully decided to repent and follow the will of God, there will be no hesitancy on his part to obey the command to be baptized.

Baptism is included in the Great Commission. The Savior said: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (Mark 16:16).

The idea that one is saved and then baptized is entirely false. After one has studied the Bible he learns that baptism comes before salvation. Your Bible reads, *“Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins”* (Acts 2:38). One is still a sinner until he has been baptized. Saul, a sinner, had been praying three days and nights. He was commanded to *“Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16). He needed to submit to baptism that his sins might be blotted out.

Peter, guided by the Spirit, declared that baptism saves. He let us know that Noah and his family were saved by water, which was a shadow of baptism that saves us (1 Peter 3:20-22).

Baptism is necessary to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). Christ is our Savior, and we are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3). *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:27).

If one is convinced that baptism is necessary, he will gladly be immersed, and will be raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

ANANIAS: A DEVOUT MAN

Bill Nicks

ANANIAS, A “*DEVOUT MAN ACCORDING TO THE LAW*,” had a good report of “*all Jews that dwelt in Damascus*” (Acts 22:12). We know that the Lord appeared to him “*in a vision*” and instructed him to “*inquire for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth*” (Acts 9:11). He was then told that Saul had seen in a vision a “*man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight*” (vs. 12).

There is no question that Ananias had miraculous power, since the Lord gave it to him, either directly by the vision, or indirectly through the laying on of apostolic hands.

We learn in Acts 8:13-17 that only the apostles could impart spiritual gifts to others. In the context, Philip, who was “*full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*” and had the “*laying on of the apostles’ hands*” (Acts 6:3-6), worked mighty miracles among the Samaritans, confirming the Word by the “*signs following*” (Mark 16:17-20). But even Philip could not impart these gifts to others; thus Peter and John, two apostles, laid their hands on the Samaritans, “*and they received the Holy Spirit*” after praying that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17). If Philip could not impart miraculous gifts, though having the laying on of apostolic hands, it follows that Ananias could not impart them to Saul. In fact, no one except the apostles had been chosen by the Lord to impart miraculous gifts. These gifts were given by the Lord for the edification of the early church in a period before revelation of the New Testament was complete (1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Ephesians 4:7-16). The church was in its infancy, and needed spiritual gifts “*until that which was perfect*” was come, that is, the complete revelation of the New Testament. The gifts were needed when the revelation was “*in part*,” or partial, “*till we all attain to the unity of the faith, unto the knowledge of the Son of God.*” Now that “*the faith has been once for all delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3), miraculous gifts are no longer needed.

Ananias laid his hands on Saul that he might receive his sight, just as the Lord had instructed him (Acts 9:11,17). After that, Saul arose and was baptized (9:18), since Ananias said to him, “*Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (22:16).

But does not Acts 9:17 also say, “*and be filled with the Holy Spirit*”? Yes, but please observe again that Ananias could not baptize him with the Holy Spirit, since only the Lord could do that. Neither could he lay

his hands on Saul and impart to him the miraculous gift of the Spirit. There are only two possibilities here: (1) Saul could receive this baptism of the Spirit from the Lord, or else (2) he could have the ability of miraculous gifts from another apostle.

It is our conviction that Paul did receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit from the Lord Himself, but not at the time the Lord appeared unto him on the road to Damascus. It was then said to him, "*I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee*" (Acts 26:16). Notice that the Lord promised to appear unto Paul in some ways in the future as well. By observing the actions of Paul and his claims later, we learn that he was baptized in the Holy Spirit, since he had power to lay his hands on others and impart spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 1:6; Acts 19:1-6; Galatians 3:2). After his conversion in Damascus, he went into Arabia and back to Damascus. After three years he went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter and James, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:16-19). In that chapter he said he received his revelation, not from man, "*but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:11ff). Sometime between his conversion and the time he went up to Jerusalem, he received an appearance of the Lord according to His promise, and was baptized with the Holy Spirit, or "*filled with the Spirit*" (Acts 9:17, 26:16; 1 Corinthians 2:12ff; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

These miraculous powers were limited to the age when the New Testament was being revealed, and after its completion, were taken away. Prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge, in fact all signs and wonders, have been taken away since the completion of the "*perfect law of liberty*" (James 1:25, 2:12).

HEAVEN

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?

Wayne Jackson

"HEAVEN" is a topic that people frequently talk about and sing about, even in secular songs, but there is very little biblically-based discussion on the subject. What are some of the scriptural facts regarding this fond hope of the faithful child of God?

The term "heaven" (or "heavens") is used in several ways in the Bible. First, there is the region just above the earth where birds fly (Genesis 2:19), and dew, clouds, frost, and rain form (Genesis 27:28;

Daniel 7:13; Job 38:29, Genesis 8:2). Second, there is the region of the moon, sun, and stars (Genesis 1:14-16; 22:17). Third, there is the “heaven of heavens” (Deuteronomy 10:14), known also as the “third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2). This is the habitation of God (Psalm 33:13,14; Matthew 6:9). Finally, in Matthew 21:25 “heaven” is used figuratively for God Himself.

THE PROMISE OF HEAVEN

Heaven, the dwelling place of Jehovah, is a precious promise for the faithful child of God. For example, those who remain loyal, even under persecution, are told that their “*reward in heaven*” will be great (Matthew 5:12). Paul declares that our hope is laid up for us “*in the heavens*” (Colossians 1:5), and Peter affirms that an incorruptible inheritance is “*reserved in heaven*” for us (1 Peter 1:4).

Who will be in heaven? The universalist alleges that all of humanity will ultimately see this blissful home, but the Scriptures provide no such hope. Jesus plainly declared: “*Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leads unto life, and few are they that find it*” (Matthew 7:13,14).

Obviously the most wonderful aspect of heaven will be the presence of the divine Godhead. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be there (see Revelation 1:4,5). Too, angels will be citizens of heaven (see Luke 15:7,10). The great men and women of faith whom we read about in the Holy Bible will likewise be inhabitants of heaven. Jesus promised: “*Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 8:11; cf. Hebrews 11:16).

So far as this present age is concerned, the hope of heaven is available only to those who are “in Christ.” “*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ...*” (Revelation 14:13). Those who choose to remain outside of Christ, i.e., outside His spiritual body, the church, are without the hope of heaven (Ephesians 2:12,13; 5:23; cf. Galatians 3:27). The inhabitants of heaven are described as those who have “*washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*” (Revelation 7:14), a process which initially occurs in obedience to the first principles of the Gospel (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16), and is maintained by sustained fidelity to truth (1 John 1:7). Heaven is a place for those who have pursued the path of obedience (Hebrews 5:9).

We must likewise note in passing that those who die in a state of innocence will also be privileged to enter heaven (see 2 Samuel 12:23; cf. Matthew 19:14). The Bible knows nothing of “limbo” — the doctrine

that “unbaptized children are excluded from heaven” — as advocated by some in the religious world.

THE NATURE OF HEAVEN

There are many who misunderstand the nature of heaven. Accordingly, they really have no desire to go there. If one were to survey such people and ask — Where would you wish to go when you die? (1) Heaven; (2) Hell; (3) Neither of the above — they probably would check number three. These folks have cultivated no spiritual appetite whatever, and thus their interest in an eternal state, apart from this world, is absolutely nil. Many are so wedded to this world that their very concept of heaven is earthly.

Contrary to the assertions of some, heaven will not be on earth. Christ plainly taught that we are not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven (Matthew 6:19). Hence, it is obvious that heaven and earth are not the same. The writer of Hebrews makes it plain that the patriarchs were but “*pilgrims on the earth*” and that they longed for a better country, i.e., a heavenly place (Hebrews 11:13-16). Clearly, they did not view earth and heaven as being identical. We are informed that this earth will pass away (Matthew 24:35; Revelation 21:1), and 2 Peter 3:1-13 contains a vivid description of the passing of this material universe.

It should further be noted that heaven, wherever it is, is not a material place. There is a beautiful portrayal of heaven in the 21st and 22nd chapters of the book of Revelation. First, it is represented as “*a new heaven and a new earth*” (21:1); then as “*a holy city, the new Jerusalem*” (21:2-4). There is a breath-taking picture of this happy realm of the redeemed, described figuratively as consisting of precious stones and pure gold (21:9-26). It is a place of perpetual day, without sin, sickness, sadness or death (4:23-27; cf. 7:16-17; 22:3,15). One must ever keep in mind that John’s visions consist of many symbols, the design of which is to represent the glory and beauty of heaven. It is surely a mistake to view these descriptions in a literal fashion, as some have done.

As we now live in the flesh, in a material world, our only perceptions, as gained from personal experience, are of a material nature. We simply are not, therefore, at this present stage of our existence, prepared to clearly understand what heaven will actually be like. In this regard, it is a challenge to walk by faith, for we cannot walk by sight. The Spirit has thus employed many figures of speech, consisting of precious material things, to convey to us the value of the heavenly state.

Heaven is not a place of physical existence. Paul declared that “*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 15:50). By way of contrast, for example, the Moslem concept of heaven is quite

physical. Equally erroneous is the idea that the marriage relationship will continue in heaven. Jesus plainly affirmed that *“in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage”* (Matthew 22:30).

It may be difficult to understand how we can enjoy heaven if there will be absolutely no physical pleasures there. We must remember, however, that all physical appetites diminish with the passing of time. Heaven is an eternal state. Consequently, the bliss of that future existence will be adapted to us as we then will be, and not as we now are. This must necessarily be the case if we are to be eternally happy!

ONLY THE OBEDIENT WILL BE SAVED

Rick Cunningham

“ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED,” is a common belief today. It is argued that if a person is truly saved, possessing the true Spirit of God, he cannot and will not fall away. If he falls away, he never was saved in the first place.

This “doctrine of perseverance” is simply not true. It is possible, and it is common, for people to be truly saved, lost, restored, and lost again. In fact, even the Holy Spirit warns us not to turn away after being saved:

“So, as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, Their hearts are always going astray, and they do not know my ways. So I declared an oath in my anger, They shall never enter my rest. See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God” (Hebrews 3:7-12).

Our words and actions determine our acceptability with God. Jesus said, *“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching”* (John 14:23). And, *“He who does not love me will not obey my teaching”* (John 14:24). And the Holy Spirit reminded the apostles of this same teaching (John 14:26).

Friend, do not entertain the idea that salvation is certain, regardless of our actions. If we would be saved, we must obey the Lord. Any other doctrine is not the Lord’s doctrine.

WHAT WOULD JESUS HAVE ME DO?

John Gipson

IF ONE IS WILLING TO LISTEN to the voice of God, he will hear the words of Jesus. Peter, James, and John learned this firsthand. On a high mountain they watched Jesus as His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light. What an occasion! But, there was more to come. A bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased: listen to him”* (Matthew 17:5). If you respect the voice of God, you will listen to His Son.

The Hebrews writer confirms all of this by pointing out that in the past God spoke in many and various ways, *“but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world”* (Hebrews 1:2).

There are many voices crying in the world today, but the one I need to hear above all others is the voice of God’s Son. And that is because God has expressly told us to hear Him.

Jesus calls us into His fellowship in words that are clear and unmistakable. *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden ... Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me”* (Matthew 11:28,29). That’s what Jesus wants you to do! Have you done it? Believers in the city of Corinth did, and the apostle Paul speaks of how they were called into the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9). Won’t you hear the voice of Jesus as did the Corinthians?

Jesus calls upon us to believe in Him. According to Jesus, this is eternal life. *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life”* (John 3:36). Peter tells us that *“every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name”* (Acts 10:43). If you do what Jesus wants you to do, you will believe in Him!

Jesus wants me to repent of my sins. He preached, *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel”* (Mark 1:15). Those who refused to repent He upbraided and warned what would happen to them on the day of judgment (Matthew 11:20-24). If I do what Jesus wants me to do, I will repent.

Jesus wants me to confess and acknowledge Him before men. He says, *“So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will*

acknowledge him before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32,33). That’s plain, isn’t it!

Jesus wants me to be baptized. He said, *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). Jesus was baptized, and He wants me to be. He says I must be born of the water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:1-5).

I want to do what Jesus wants me to do, because life is at stake. *“...He who does not obey the Son shall not see life...”* (John 3:36).

THE TWO-SIDED CROSS

Olden Cook

THE CROSS WAS A two-sided structure. It was both **ugly** and **beautiful**. It was **ugly** because our sins were hanging there in the personage of Jesus ... it was **beautiful** because it was our Savior hanging there, dying for our sins. ***“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Romans 5:4). It was **ugly** in that it meant horrible suffering for the Son of God, suffering beyond our wildest imagination ... it was **beautiful** because it portrayed in the most graphic way the love and **grace of God extended to us**. ***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”*** (John 3:16,17).

As Jesus was lifted up on the cross atop the hill of Calvary, God was reaching down to the valley of our despair and hopelessness. It was the nature of the event taking place there that made it both **ugly** and **beautiful** at the same time: **ugly** in that it was sin — the sin of those who physically perpetrated the act, your sins, my sins — that nailed Him there . . . but **beautiful** in what it did for us!

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame; And I love that old cross where the dearest and best For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I’ll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down; I will cling to the old rugged cross And exchange it some day for a crown.

BACK TO THE BIBLE

JOHNNY RAMSEY

WHILE I DEEPLY APPRECIATE THE work of any man anywhere who called his fellows back to the Bible, I do not wish to wear that man's name in religion nor restore his personal views to earth. Why not just be a Christian? Why not just teach, believe and obey the sacred Scriptures? Even in the first century the exaltation of preachers and the using of their names as designations was strictly forbidden (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Such action was considered a mark of carnality. It is even so today!

Now, brethren, let us be honest and practical. As much as we may admire Alexander Campbell — his courage and brilliance — we dare not exalt, idolize, extol and defend his teachings. Campbell was just a man. He taught several things no true gospel preacher can endorse. Take, for instance, his leadership in the Missionary Society, or his strange views regarding the *"thousand year reign."* However, even if everything he taught was 100% correct, we owe it all to the Lord and the New Testament and not to Alexander Campbell! The sage of Bethany was an exceptional person, but we need to go beyond the hills of West Virginia all the way back to Jerusalem for doctrine. One quote from Christ or an apostle is worth more than a dozen from Campbell, Lipscomb or McGarvey! It is a mistake of the deepest order to lean upon "the glorious heritage of the Restoration movement" when we can bask in the sunlight of the old Jerusalem gospel. We would be wise to get back to the original blueprint and quit trying to prove our point from the writings of 1830.

Personally, I get concerned with preachers who desire to protect "our traditional stance in the religious world." This is equally as dangerous as overlooking the monumental courage it took for the restorers to break away from sectarian allegiance. But, to the genuine Christian, our Lord will always be esteemed as the greatest preacher of all. May we, therefore, follow His precepts, walk in His footprints and be content in the church purchased with His precious blood. We don't need Campbell's picture in our library or a pilgrimage to his tomb to inspire us to a closer walk with Jesus. Centuries ago Peter stood on top of a mountain, deeply impressed with Moses, Elijah and Christ. But, after the drama had finished its message, he *"saw only Jesus"* (Matt. 17:8). He is still the only One to whom we really owe allegiance. Any other emphasis but magnifies the folly of sectarianism.

The New Testament not only reveals the religion of Christ in vivid

detail, but also gives a solemn warning to anyone who would add to or take away from the pattern of Christianity. Read 2 Jno. 9 and Rev. 22:18-19: *"Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God... I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of — this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book."* Jesus makes it clear that, *"The seed of the kingdom is the word of God"* (Lk. 8:11). Thus, the power of truth resides not in apostolic succession, nor in the creeds and catechisms of men, but in the gospel of Christ. That gospel is contained within the New Testament. We dare not preach any other (Gal. 1:6-9).

Even the casual reader of the Bible would admit that pure Christianity existed in the first century. The New Testament gives us a clear picture of the church which Jesus built (Matt. 16:18). The worship, doctrine and life of the early Christians can be ascertained from a study of the word of God. Regardless of what has transpired between the first century and the twentieth, one can be a Christian today just like Paul, Peter, Stephen and Philip. Not "this kind" or "that kind" of Christian, but just a Christian: simply a member of the same church the first century Christians were members of. How? If we do what they did, teach what they taught, we will certainly be what they were. What denomination would that make us members of? Why, none, of course — and that is the point! None of the denominations were in existence for several centuries. Jesus prayed for unity, not diversity in religion (Jno. 17:20-21). Paul condemned division among believers (1 Cor. 1:10-13). We know, therefore, that the early Christians were members of the church of Christ and not of any sectarian movement.

Since the seed of the kingdom is the word of God, men can be just Christians today as well. It will mean giving up all doctrines of men. Anything not taught in the Scriptures will have *to be* dropped. For our Lord said that men worship in vain when they *"teach for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Mk. 7:7). Are you willing to investigate all that your religion teaches in the sacred light of the Bible? You might find that instead of following true New Testament Christianity you have been adhering to the principles of some man or movement that arose centuries after Christ. Do you have a Bible reason for what you do? The Lord said, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (1 Pet. 4:11).