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The Church of Christ Was Predicted and Established

Thomas Meade

I love the church of Christ, which is God's Kingdom that His Son built to be His Bride. I love being a servant of Christ preaching His saving word. I am grateful for the Garden City, Saline, and West congregation's for hosting this lectureship under the oversight of her fine and faithful Elders. To George Beals, I am very thankful for his loyal friendship and hard work for the Master in his direction of this lectureship, and for the Michigan Bible School (MBS), where he and John Natiw co-direct. I have been privileged and blessed to teach God's Word at MBS, and blessed to be the Gospel preacher for the loving faithful Brethren at the Hazel Park church of Christ in Hazel Park MI.

We find in Gen 3:15 the first mention of a redeemer the Seed of Promise.

15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." (NKJV)

Jesus will (crush) bruise the head of the serpent Satan at His resurrection where the Gates of Hades will not keep Him from building His church. Matt. 16:18

18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (NKJV)

Very few will argue concerning the importance of the Kingdom in God's plan. His plan is ever of old Before the foundation of the world the church was in the mind of God, Eph. 3:10-11

10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)

Daniel writes of the Kingdom in revealing the king's (Nebuchadnezzar) dream--Daniel 2:31-45

31 ¶ "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. 32 "This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 "its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34 "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. 36 "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. 37 "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; 38 "and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all--you are this head of gold. 39 "But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. 40 "And the fourth

kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. 41 "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42 "And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 "As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. 44 "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. 45 "Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure." (NKJV)

Yet there remains an argument as to when the kingdom was or will be established. Every Kingdom of the Ancient World has ended at some point in history; Mighty kingdoms have fallen, such as Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece, and Rome.

DANIEL'S IMAGE.

375



<http://nichirenscoffeehouse.net/Sivatha/12.375.html>

Egyptians – Imperial overlords of Palestine and many surrounding territories for most of 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.

[United Kingdom of Israel] – The "Golden Age" of Ancient Israel, when the twelve tribes are independent and united under Kings Saul, David, and

Solomon (ca. 1030-930 BC); but after Solomon's death the kingdom divides.

Assyrians – King Sennacherib destroys the northern Kingdom of Israel & its capital Samaria; the ten northern tribes of Israelites are exiled and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire (721 - 600's BC).

Neo-BABYLONIANS – King Nebuchadnezzar captures the southern Kingdom of Judah, **destroys the Temple and city of Jerusalem**; many Jews taken captive to Babylon for several generations, in what is called the "Babylonian Exile" (587 - 539 BC). **Babylon was the head of gold**

MEDES & PERSIANS – a smaller kingdom which never directly ruled Israel, but helped others defeat the Assyrians and Babylonians; it was then incorporated into the Persian Empire, becoming its largest province (by 550 BC). – King Cyrus conquers the Babylonian empire, allows the Jews to return to Judea and rebuild the temple; the Persians control Judea through approved local leaders (539 - 330's BC). **Medo-Persia was the breast and arms of silver**

GREEKS – After Alexander the Great becomes King of Macedonia (332 BC), his armies conquer the East (almost the whole Persian Empire), but he dies very young (323 BC). His Hellenistic empire is then divided between four generals, who battle each other in the "Wars of the Diadochi." Eventually, two long-reigning dynasties rule in the East. **Greece was the belly and thighs of brass**

Ptolemies – Greek rulers from Egypt who also control Palestine at first (ca. 323 - 198 BC);

Seleucids – Greek rulers from Syria who take over control of Palestine later (198 - 141 BC); the tenth in this dynasty (if starting from Alexander) is:

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who **desecrates the Jerusalem Temple** by placing statues in it (167 BC), thereby sparking the "Maccabean Revolt"; the Jews soon recapture and **rededicate the Temple** (164 BC).

[Maccabean/Hasmonean Dynasty] – The Jews briefly regain full independence (141 - 63 BC).

Romans – General Pompey leads the Roman take-over of Israel in 63 BC; **Rome was the legs and toes of iron and clay**

(**The Book of Daniel – Study Materials**-by Prof. Felix Just, S.J. <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Daniel.htm>)

Ancient Kingdoms/Empires, such as Egypt have fallen by the wayside and have become memories of world dominance and control.

Approximate Dates of the 4 Empires

Empire	Date
Babylonian	525 B.C.— 457 B.C.
Medo-Persian	457 B.C.— 332 B.C.
Greece	332 B.C. — 30 B.C.
Imperial Rome	30 B.C. — 476 A.D.

Around 30 B.C., Julius Caesar conquered Egypt (or rather Egypt conquered Julius Caesar) and this was the official beginning of the reign of the fourth wild beast empire. This was about 70 years before the Messiah began His ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, around 27 A.D. <http://www.reformation.org/fourthempire.html>

The world has never seen a truly invincible kingdom. Many people are still looking for a physical literal kingdom. Since they cannot see evidence of the kingdom physically, they automatically assume the kingdom will exist in the future. But the nature of this kingdom is not physical - Romans 14:16-17;

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)

Paul says that eating and drinking is something you do that is physical but the kingdom is spiritual with righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. It is not of this world: John 18:36.

36 "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." (NKJV)

It is a spiritual kingdom: Luke 17:20-21.

20 Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (NKJV)

Yet, this kingdom is not without its strength: I Corinthians 4:20.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. (NKJV)

Many teach that Jesus came to build His Kingdom, but since the Jews rejected Him He substituted the church for the Kingdom, and thus we are now living in the "church age". This makes Jesus a failure, according to their teaching.

Premillennialists believe there will be a resurrection for the righteous before Jesus establishes His earthly kingdom, then another resurrection for the wicked 1000 years later. Jesus will first come invisibly, unknown to men in general (the PAROUSIA), raise the righteous dead, and take them from the earth for a 7-year period of "rapture." During this time will be great suffering called the "tribulation" for the wicked people who were left on earth. At the end of these 7 years, the forces of evil will gather to fight against Jesus, who will visibly return (EPIPHANEIA) to defeat them at the battle of Armageddon. Jesus will then establish an earthly, civil kingdom over which He will reign as King from Jerusalem for one thousand years (the millennium). At the end of 1000 years, the wicked dead will be raised, then all men will be judged and receive their eternal rewards.

http://www.biblestudylessons.com/cgi-bin/gospel_way/second_coming.php

The kingdom would be established during the fourth empire - Daniel 2:44

44" And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. (NKJV)

The fourth empire from the days of Nebuchadnezzar was the Roman Empire. In another vision, Daniel saw the Son of Man approach the Ancient of Days God the Father, and receive a kingdom - Daniel 7:13-14.

13 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. (NKJV)

The vision in Daniel 7:13-14 is connected to Acts 1:9-11;

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (NKJV)

Again it was during the days of the fourth beast (fourth empire) - Daniel 7:23-27.

23 "Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. 24 The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings. 25 He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time. 26 'But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy it forever 27 Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'(NKJV)

It would come in the people's lifetime, which Jesus was speaking to - Mark 9:1.

1 ¶ And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." (NKJV)

Jesus said they who were standing there would not die until they had seen the kingdom come in power! If the kingdom has not yet come then we have some people that are over two thousand years old walking around today. Notice how the following verses all work together with the prophecies concerning the kingdom and how it will begin in Jerusalem.

Ac 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (NKJV)

Ac 1:12 ¶ Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. Ac 1:13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James.

Ac 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 ¶ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. (NKJV)

Isa 2:2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of

the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (NKJV)

Mic 4:1 ¶ Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it. 2 Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (NKJV)

Lu 24:47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (NKJV)

When Jesus was born, it was foretold that He would take up a kingdom without end – Luke 1:31-33.

31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (NKJV)

Christ had said that the time for the kingdom was (close) at hand. The prophecy was near its fulfillment - Mark 1:14-15.

14 ¶ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (NKJV)

Its ruler would be like no other - Isaiah 9:6-7.

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. (NKJV)

Its laws would come from God - Jeremiah 31:31-34.

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- 32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their

hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (NKJV)

It is a kingdom with citizens born of the water and the Spirit- John 3:5.

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (NKJV)

People are added to the church/kingdom Acts 2:47

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (NKJV)

While being born again to walk in newness of life (John 3.) Many of those who should come will refuse, but it will attract the lowly - Matthew 22:2-14. Its standard of desirable and undesirable would be different - Matthew 21:28-32.

Matthew 5:3 - Belongs to the poor in spirit (those who are humble and dependent on God).

Matthew 18:1-4 - Must become like a child to enter (those who are humble and forgiving like a child).

Mark 10:23-27 - The rich would have difficulty entering (those who love money and make it their god Mt 6:24, 1Ti 6:10).

Matthew 7:21 - Only the obedient would be accepted (those who keep His commandment and faithful unto death John 14:15, Rev. 2:10).

Luke 9:61-62 - It requires complete dedication and commitment. If you look back into the world from where you came, you could begin to drift back into it and while taking your eyes off Christ, and lose sight of Him. If you are plowing and look backwards you begin to go off course with your plowing and go into different directions.

Lu 9:61 And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (NKJV)

The Present Existence of the Kingdom

Christ is now the King of His Kingdom; He has been given all authority and all men are subject unto Him, both those in the world and those in the church/kingdom - Matthew 28:18.

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (NKJV)

He was made both Lord and Christ - Acts 2:36.

Ac 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (NKJV)

All things are under His feet - Ephesians 1:20-22.

20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, (NKJV)

All authorities are subject to Him - I Peter 3:22.

22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (NKJV)

He is now the ruler over the kings of the earth - Revelation 1:5.

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, (NKJV)

He has received the rod of iron - Revelation 2:26-27.

26 "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations--27 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' --as I also have received from My Father; (NKJV)

He is King of kings and Lord of lords - I Timothy 6:14-15

1Ti 6:14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, (NKJV)

His reign will endure - I Corinthians 15:25-26.

1Co 15:25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (NKJV)

Tell me how Jesus is currently the King if he has yet to receive a kingdom? God calls people into his kingdom - Christians have been conveyed into the kingdom - I Thessalonians 2:12. Colossians 1:13.

I Thessalonians 2:12 - that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (NKJV)

Colossians 1:13 - He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (NKJV)

We are receiving a kingdom - Hebrews 12:28.

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (NKJV)

John had companions in the kingdom - Revelation 1:9.

9 ¶ I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

Christians have confessed Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9-10.

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (NKJV)

The terms “church” and “kingdom” are used interchangeably as found in Matthew 16:18-19"

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (NKJV)

Revelation 1:4

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, (NKJV)

Revelation 1:6

And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)

This is why Christians are fellow citizens - Ephesians 2:19

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. (NKJV)

Notice too that our citizenship is in heaven - Philippians 3:20

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

The kingdom of the present is the church, which is the kingdom that shall never be destroyed.

The Future of the kingdom

Matthew 13:40-43

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41 "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (NKJV)

In this parable the unrighteous are removed from the currently existing kingdom. The righteous that remain will shine in the future kingdom. In the future kingdom, the reign is turned back over to the Father - I Corinthians 15:22-26. The future kingdom is spoken of as an inheritance - I Corinthians 15:50; 6:9-10

It is a heavenly kingdom - II Timothy 4:18 - Sometimes confusion occurs when a distinction is not made between the present Kingdom and the future Kingdom.

Paul exhorts his brethren to endure to enter the kingdom - Acts 14:22

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (NKJV)

Peter says much the same as Paul - II Peter 1:10-11

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

When Jesus comes again, it will not be to establish His kingdom, but to take its loyal (Faithful unto death Rev. 2:10) citizens of that kingdom home - I Corinthians 15:24-26.

24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (NKJV)

No church, Catholic or Protestant, can trace its historical lineage back to

New Testament times.

The oldest denominations are too young in age to be a New Testament church. How far back can the roots of denominations be traced? Notice the following dates of origin:

- Roman Catholic Church - Rome, 606 A.D., with Boniface III as pope.
- Lutheran Church - 1520 A. D., Germany, with Martin Luther's writings as authority

- Episcopalian - 1534, England, when Henry VIII broke with Roman Catholicism
- Presbyterian -1536, Switzerland, led by John Calvin
- Congregational -1550 A.D., England, by Robert Browne
- Baptist - 1607, Holland, by John Smythe
- Methodist - 1739, England, by John Wesley
- Latter Day Saints (Mormons) - 1830, America, by Joseph Smith
- Adventists - 1830, America, by William Miller
- Christian Scientist - 1866, America, by Mary Baker Eddy
- Jehovah's Witnesses - 1872, America, by Charles T. Russell

As a matter of fact, at the time Jesus built his kingdom (church), no denomination of any kind was in existence. The church of Jesus Christ was established in 33 A.D., in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1, 2). Any denomination that had its origin by another founder than Jesus cannot be the church that belongs to Christ. Any denomination that is younger than 33 A.D. cannot be the Lord's church. Any denomination that was begun in another location other than Jerusalem cannot be the Lord's church. Any denomination that follows a creed other than the Bible cannot be the Lord's church. Notice the Biblical history of the Lord's church:

- Subject of Prophecy: Distant Fulfillment promised
 - 2 Samuel 7:12-16 - the kingdom to be in David's lineage (Christ)
 - Isaiah 2 - the kingdom to begin at Jerusalem
 - Daniel 2 - the kingdom to begin in the days of Roman kings
 - Joel 2 - the kingdom to begin with power from the Holy Spirit
- Subject of Prophecy: Near Fulfillment promises
 - Mt. 3:2 (Mk. 1:1-8) - John, the kingdom is at hand
 - Mk. 1:14-15 - Jesus, the kingdom is at hand
 - Mt. 16:13-19 - Jesus, the kingdom is promised
 - Mk. 9:1 - Jesus, the kingdom to be established in life-time of hearers
- Prophecy fulfilled - the kingdom of Christ is established at Jerusalem
 - Acts 1-2 (notice 2:30-31) - throne of David established at Jesus' resurrection
 - Acts 2:47 - saved people added to the church in Jerusalem
 - Col. 1:13 - people continually added to the kingdom (church)
- Churches of Christ listed in New Testament as in existence during apostles' life
 - Jerusalem - Acts 1:36-47; 6:1; 8:1-4
 - Judea and Samaria - Acts 1:8; 8:5; 9:31
 - Uttermost parts of the earth - Acts 1:8
 - Gentiles added to the church - Acts 10, 11, 15
 - Antioch - Acts 11:19-24
 - Asia Minor
 - Paul's first missionary journey: Acts 13:1-28
 - Paul's second journey: Acts 15:36--16:5 (Macedonian call)
 - Europe
 - Paul's third journey: Acts 18:23--21:8
 - Rome - Romans 1:1-7

- Corinth - 1 Cor. 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:1-2
- churches of Galatians - Gal. 1:1-2
- Ephesus - Eph. 1:1-2
- Philippi - Phil. 1:1-2
- Colossae - Col. 1:1-2
- Thessalonica - 1 Thes. 1:1-2; 2 Thes. 1:1-2
- Churches in private homes - 1 Cor. 16:18; Col. 4:16, etc.
- Seven churches of Asia - Rev. 1:10--3:32

Thus, overwhelming evidence exists in scripture to prove that the church foreseen by the prophets and promised by Jesus actually started in Acts 2 in Jerusalem and spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond in New Testament times. Yet, as the New Testament ends, not a single denomination existed!

(Tom M. Roberts, What Is The Church of Christ?

<http://www.watchmanmag.com/intro.htm>)

Below are eight arguments proving that the Kingdom came in the first century. The source of this information has been lost. I Claim no originality, with this or with anything else I write. I have learned and borrowed this information from others more learned than I.

ARGUMENT ONE: Mark 9:1. This passage shows that the Kingdom or the Church was to come in the lifetime of the apostles. The church came with power, and the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost in the "apostles' lifetime.

ARGUMENT TWO: Mark 1: 14-15, state that Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled." The time is fulfilled The Kingdom or Church is at hand. The time is fulfilled. The Church is at hand.

ARGUMENT THREE: Daniel 2:44. The Kingdom or Church was to be established in the days of the fourth empire, that is, the Roman Empire. The Romans were ruling on Pentecost or during the time of Pentecost.

ARGUMENT FOUR: Isaiah 2:2-3. It was to be in the Last Days when God's house was to be established or set up; all nations were to flow into it; and the law of God was to go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. All of this happened on Pentecost.

ARGUMENT FIVE: Psalms 110:1-4. At least five things in this amazing prophecy point directly to Pentecost. 1. Christ was designated the "Lord" of Psalms 110 on Pentecost - Acts 2:34-36. 2. Christ was exalted to God's right hand - Acts 2:33. 3. The rod of His mouth, the gospel, went out of Zion for the first time on Pentecost. 4. On Pentecost Christ began to rule in the midst of His enemies. 5. He became High Priest after the order of Melchizedek that day.

ARGUMENT SIX: Psalms 132: 11. In this passage it says that David was to have One to sit on his throne. Peter quoted this passage and applied that to Pentecost.

ARGUMENT SEVEN: The seventh argument points to the keys of the kingdom that were given to Peter used them on Pentecost. Peter used those keys given by Christ and about 3,000 obeyed the gospel that day.

ARGUMENT EIGHT: The eighth argument points to Daniel chapter seven. Daniel showed that right before Pentecost the Ancient of Days was seen by Daniel as the Son of Man coming in the clouds to the Ancient of Days to receive a kingdom, dominion, glory and power.

May we use these arguments and others to show how false Premillennialism really is. The scriptures prove the Church or Kingdom was definitely established in the first century.

Many use modernistic, or as some call it, “contemporary” textbooks written by both our brethren and those in denominations. God’s Word does not change, nor does His Church. New textbooks are wonderful but they must remain true to God’s Word to be pleasing to Him. In order for the false teachers to change the truth about the Bible’s teachings concerning the way to worship God, you must first change the truth about our past. Many are doing just that, by claiming that the church of Christ was established by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone in the 19th century. I now leave you with Brother Choate’s article from the Firm Foundation.

Reviving the Ancient Faith:
The Story of the Churches of Christ in America
A Critique of the Richard T. Hughes' Book
By J. E. Choate

Dr. Hughes desires the honor of writing the definitive history of the churches of Christ in this century. The book is judged a failure. Contemporary Restoration historians give the book low marks finding the scholarship in the research to be inept, biased, and historically incorrect.

This writer criticizes the book solely because it is another means designed to destroy the conservative churches of Christ. First, the book reflects the theology and philosophy of our liberal brethren who dishonor the biblical traditions of the conservative churches of Christ.

Second, this article(s) will document the fact that Dr. Hughes fabricates a case that the churches of Christ began as a sect in the early years of the 19th century. The study is an odd mixture of fact, fiction, propaganda, and sheer nonsense. The definitive Restoration histories that Hughes seeks to emulate are W.E. Garrison and A.T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History*; William E. Tucker and Lester G. McAllister, *A Journey in Faith: A History of the Christ Church (Disciples of Christ)*. James DeForest Murch of the Christian Church wrote *Christians Only*. These historians did not calculate to destroy their own churches.

The books written by Earl I. West titled *The Search for the Ancient Order* reflect honor on the churches of Christ. His credentials as a bona fide historian are credible. He believes that the church of Christ was born from the baptismal waters on Pentecost as a direct act of God.

We are frank to say we are filled with disgust for the likes of Rubel Shelly, Douglas Foster, and Richard Hughes who profess love for the churches of Christ, which they would dishonor by reducing the churches to the status of another Protestant denomination.

Outside of the glowing promotions of the book by Douglas Foster in the *Restoration Quarterly* and the *Christian Chronicle*, and a review by Larry James in *Wineskins*, the book is receiving little favorable attention.

Dr. Hughes' research in the files of the *Gospel Advocate* and the *Christian Standard* reflects the famous line of Alexander Pope — "A little learning is a dangerous thing."

Hughes has flunked the test, which would merit him a place in the ranks of credible historians of the Restoration. This is proved by the fact that he has fabricated whole blocks of Restoration history. Dr. Hughes thinks to make his case with misinformation and distortion.

These are serious charges. We do not question the integrity of Dr. Hughes, just his reliability as a Restoration historian. However, we do accuse him with "blind siding" the facts of what actually happened, to concoct a story.

This fact is sharply focused in his failure to understand that Isaac Errett, not Stone and Campbell, is the chief architect of the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ as they exist today. Likewise, Hughes does not understand that David Lipscomb read clearly the scriptural blueprint of the apostolic church. His understanding of Lipscomb is acutely limited and wrongheaded.

What amounts to a show of courage to his admiring liberal brethren is little more than a quixotic jousting among the historical windmills to put down the conservatives churches of Christ which are the objects of his increasing fury. We fault Dr. Hughes for his scurrilous attacks on the conservative churches just to climb a little higher on the academic ladder.

Dr. Hughes tells us of the pain he suffered when he abandoned the faith of his fathers. Does he really believe that this new jerry-built denomination — Church of Christ —, which is not yet on the drawing board, will replace the church that Jesus built upon the rock. In this new "propped up" denomination, there is raucous applause at their baptisms, overhead projectors, praise services, and a

host of other innovative practices in their worship services. Such are not unscriptural — just silly.

The main tenets of their theology are love, grace, and open fellowship. Their ideal church models are the Willow Creek Community Church and the "Third Wave" Pentecostal movement where the ecstatic worshipers laugh their heads off. Why Dr. Hughes continues to identify himself with the churches of Christ is a puzzle. He is one of five members of the *Editorial Committee of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society*. Dr. Douglas A. Foster is a member of the Editorial Committee of the DCHS. There is no denomination in existence on this planet whose theology is more liberal than the Disciples of Christ from gays in their clergy and the elimination of gender pronouns from their Liberated Bible. Is this what Dr. Royce Money means by "unity in diversity"?

Analogy: Babblers in the Market Place

Whatever knowledge of American church history Dr. Hughes picked up in the University of Iowa, he lacks the perceptive, intuitive, and imaginative gifts of a creative thinker.

It is preposterous that Dr. Hughes would even imagine that he has now joined the illustrious ranks of such Restoration historians as DeGroot, Murch, Tucker, McAllister, and Earl I. West. Has Dr. Hughes struck a bargain with Mephistopheles for academic recognition at the cost of his spiritual birthright?

The Major Theses of "Reviving the Ancient Faith"

Hughes stumbles and falls on the very first page of his book where he states the white mainstream churches of Christ trace their American heritage to Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. Even a poorly informed Restoration historian would know enough to recognize that the divine beginning of the church was on Pentecost AD 33.

Dr. Hughes contends that four major themes have shaped the character of the traditions of the churches of Christ from their 19th century beginnings. A brief statement for each must suffice for the time being.

First, he contends that the defining characteristic of the churches of Christ throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th century was the notion of the Restoration of primitive Christianity. He states that a number of religious movements in the 19th century, including the Mormon Church, dedicated themselves to recovering primitive Christianity.

Second, Dr. Hughes fancies that he has a safe haven in a tenured position inside the ivory towers of academia. But the impact of these words will eventually settle in on his brethren: "*Churches of Christ began as a sect in the early nineteenth*

century and evolved into a denomination during the course of the twentieth century."

Third, Dr. Hughes argues that churches of Christ drew from two leaders—Campbell and Stone. The hard facts are they were the foundational forerunners of Lard, Milligan, McGarvey, Fanning, Lipscomb, Errett, Lamar, Garrison, and others who hammered out the details.

Fourth, Dr. Hughes bases his book on two millennial doctrines. Campbell is pictured as holding to a postmillennial view (that time when Christian faith would reign triumphantly on earth in a golden age of peace). On the other hand, Hughes contends that Stone promoted his pessimistic understanding that not until the "Second Coming" and the millennial rule of Christ on earth would the messianic ideal become a reality. Dr. Hughes builds his whole case around this "absurd" contention.

(Firm Foundation http://www.bible-infonet.org/ff/articles/church/111_09_14.htm)

Rightly Dividing Biblical Obligations & Options
Douglas Hoff
Part 1: Optional Matters
(Romans 14)

INTRODUCTION

1. Every action man engages in may be classified as either obligatory or optional.
 - a. God has regulated certain actions through his word.
 - i. They may be actions which are commanded.
 - ii. Or, they may be actions which are prohibited.
 - iii. Man ought (i.e., is obligated) to respect the commands and restrictions.
 - b. Other actions fall in the realm of optional matters.
 - i. God does not regulate them but has given man freedom of choice in these matters.
 - ii. There is no sin if man chooses to engage in such actions.
 - iii. Neither is there sin if man chooses to refrain from such practices.
2. This lesson is divided into two parts.
 - a. The first deals with matters that are not obligatory (hence, optional).
 - b. The second part deals with obligatory matters.
 - c. Problems will always arise in the church when Christians fail to properly distinguish between the two.
3. The church at Rome in the first century had the problem of contention over the matter of personal scruples.
4. This congregation had a mixed membership: some were Jews and some were Gentiles.
5. This led to differing views on certain matters such as eating of meats and observing days.
6. Some felt that it was wrong to eat certain meats while others saw nothing wrong with it.
7. These actions fall into the category of optional observance.
8. However, this does not mean that they are unimportant for they were causing difficulties for the body of Christ.
9. Therefore, we ought to study this issue for it can cause trouble for the church today if there is ignorance about this teaching.

DISCUSSION

- I. **BRETHREN ARE ADMONISHED TO RECEIVE ONE ANOTHER IN MATTERS OF OPINION. (Rom. 14:1-3)**

- A. THE STRONG BROTHER IS TOLD TO ACCEPT THE WEAK BROTHER.
 - 1. "Faith" in chapter 14 refers to personal belief or conviction regarding matters of liberty.
 - a. Eating meat is a matter of personal conviction (Rom. 14:23).
 - b. The weak brother has stronger scruples (i.e., a more restrictive conscience).
 - 2. The Lord had declared all foods clean yet some still held to various traditions (Acts 10:9-15; Gal.2:11-12)
 - 3. Strife is caused when one tries to bind his opinions on others.
 - a. No one has the right to make or loose laws for God.
 - b. Well meaning but uninformed brethren may be tempted to "point the finger" at others who make full use of their freedom in the area of opinions.
 - 4. The strong brother may feel the weak brother is overly scrupulous and thus ridicule or ignore his protests.

- B. THE WEAK BROTHER IS TOLD THAT THE STRONG BROTHER IS NOT SINNING.
 - 1. When one feels strongly about his principles, it is possible for him to assume the stronger brother is violating God's law.
 - 2. Man's conscience is not equal to God's law.

II. BRETHREN ARE WARNED AGAINST JUDGING THE SCRUPLES OF OTHERS. (Rom. 14:4-13)

- A. EACH CHRISTIAN "REPORTS" TO THE LORD, NOT MAN.
 - 1. This is also true in matters of opinion.
 - 2. As long as a man is fully persuaded in his own mind, he is likely to act on his convictions in service to God.

- B. THE IMPORTANT MATTER IS THAT IN THE EXERCISE OF LIBERTY EACH PERSON SHOULD GIVE THANKS TO GOD.

- C. WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT OTHERS ARE ACTING BASED ON THEIR CONVICTIONS BEFORE GOD, AND WE CAN'T JUDGE THEIR HEARTS.

- D. SINCE WE SHALL STAND BEFORE GOD IN JUDGMENT, WE SHOULD PURPOSE NOT TO CAUSE DISSENSION OVER PERSONAL CONVICTIONS.

III. CHRISTIANS ARE COMMANDED TO WALK IN LOVE REGARDING LIBERTY OF OPINIONS. (Rom. 14:14-19)

- A. SOME, INCLUDING PAUL, HAD THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ALL FOODS HAD BEEN DECLARED CLEAN AND THIS PERSUADED THEIR CONSCIENCES.

- B. OTHERS MAY HAVE BEEN TAUGHT BUT THEIR CONSCIENCES COULD NOT YET ACCEPT THE KNOWLEDGE.
- C. THE STRONGER BROTHER SHOULD REFRAIN THE EXERCISE OF HIS LIBERTY IF IT WOULD HURT THE WEAK BROTHER.
 - 1. Some will exercise “their rights” without regarding others.
 - 2. Such blatant disregard can cause others to sin and fall away.
 - a. It is a serious matter to violate one’s conscience.
 - b. A brother is precious to Christ—he died for him.
 - c. Eating is not the ultimate issue in the kingdom.
 - d. We should strive to help one another—not tear each other down by demanding our own way.
 - 3. One who is willing to forgo his own liberty for the sake of another will:
 - a. promote righteousness (i.e., right dealings with men).
 - b. promote peace and joy.
 - c. be acceptable to God and men.

IV. BY HIS ACTIONS THE STRONG BROTHER SHOULD NEVER ENCOURAGE THE WEAK BROTHER TO OVERRIDE HIS CONSCIENCE. (Rom. 14:20-15:2)

- A. A WEAK BROTHER IN CHRIST CAN BE DESTROYED OVER OPINIONS.
 - 1. Christians are called the “work of God.”
 - 2. Even though eating meats is neither right nor wrong inherently, it becomes wrong for the strong brother if he eats before the weak and causes him to do that of which he is unsure (cf. 1 Cor. 8:13).
 - 3. The loving thing would be to avoid causing a brother to stumble.
- B. THE STRONG BROTHER SHOULD KEEP HIS OPINION TO HIMSELF.
 - 1. He can exercise his opinion in private (i.e. before God); there is no sin in that.
 - 2. However, a public exercise of his liberty would condemn him by provoking the weak brother.
 - 3. The weak brother may be emboldened to do something he doubts is proper.
 - 4. God’s decree is that violating one’s conscience is sin and brings damnation!
 - a. This should impress us with its seriousness (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19).
 - b. A person who will disregard his scruples may easily be induced to transgress commandments of God.
- C. NATURALLY, THE STRONG ARE EXPECTED TO UPHOLD THE WEAK.
 - 1. This is a general rule in life.
 - 2. Our desire should be to please our brethren to edify the body.

Part 2: Obligatory Matters (1 Corinthians 11:1-16)

INTRODUCTION

1. Customs are not easily changed. It usually takes many years of neglect before they fade away.
2. When people become devoted to them such traditions take on the appearance of law.
3. A prime example of this can be found in Acts 6:14 where it was reported of Stephen, “for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.”
4. Granted, those customs were God’s law at one time but they had ceased to be binding on anyone after the death of Christ.
5. Even today, after nearly two thousand years, there are still Jews devoted to those customs.
6. As Christians we need to realize a similar situation exists regarding certain customs.
7. While most commands and examples of actions in the New Testament are based on eternal moral principles, some were based on customs of the first century.
8. For example, do we sin if we do not fast (Matt. 6:16,17) or wash one another’s feet (John 13:14,15; 1 Tim. 5:10)?
 - a. There is no sin involved in not fasting since it is not commanded for Christians.
 - b. Jesus simply recognized that his disciples would fast because of their Jewish culture.
 - c. Jesus also said he washed the feet of the apostles as an example of humble service (John 13:15).

DISCUSSION

I. MUST CHRISTIANS OBEY EVERY COMMAND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

- A. SOMETIMES, CHRISTIANS FAIL TO ‘RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH.’
 1. 2 Timothy 2:15 applies to more than the distinctions between the Old and New Testaments.
 2. We need to recognize some commands were intended only for certain individuals

(e.g., 2 Tim. 4:13).

3. We also need to recognize some commands and examples were rooted in first century manners.
4. If those habits change, are we obligated to follow the original customs today?
5. One good example is the command to “greet one another with a holy kiss” or “greet one another with a kiss of love” (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14).
 - a. In the first century kissing was a common form of greeting in the Middle East.
 - b. It still is in some cultures but not in this country.
 - c. Are we sinning when we fail to greet fellow Christians with a kiss?

B. CERTAIN COMMANDS WERE BASED ON CUSTOMS OF THE TIME.

1. In the NKJV version of the Bible the word custom or customs occurs nineteen times in the New Testament.
 - a. It usually translates the Greek word *ethos*, (Strong’s number 1485) which means a usage prescribed by habit or law; a rite or ceremony.
2. Such commands do not deal with matters that are inherently moral issues.
3. Nevertheless, those customs were to be observed in their time to avoid giving offense.
 - a. (Acts 24:16) “. . . I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God **and men**.”
 - b. (John 19:40) Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.
 - c. However, we do not have such burial practices today.
 - d. Generally speaking, it is best to observe existing customs to avoid giving offense.
4. However, it is worth noting that Paul does speak of inspired traditions which were (and are) to be obeyed (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6,14).

C. MOST COMMANDS AND EXAMPLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE BASED ON ETERNAL PRINCIPLES AND MUST BE FOLLOWED AS LONG AS THE EARTH REMAINS.

1. For example, the headship of man over woman is not based on culture or man’s customs.
 - a. (1 Cor. 11:3) But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.
 - b. If one were to argue that man’s headship over woman is culturally based then the rest of the verse would be based on culture too!
 - c. Paul makes it clear that man’s headship was ordained by God’s creation order.
 - d. (1 Tim. 2:12,13) And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. {13} For Adam was formed first, then Eve.
2. As another example, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins are not products of man’s culture (Acts 2:38).

- a. Many people resist these commands.
- b. An action that is customary is generally observed, not opposed.
- 3. God commands all men everywhere to repent and be baptized for salvation and this truth will never change.
 - a. God commanded repentance (Acts 17:30).
 - b. God commanded baptism (Acts 10:48).

II. SOME TREAT GOD’S COMMANDS AS NOTHING BUT CUSTOMS.

A. IT IS ASSERTED WOMEN CAN FILL LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE CHURCH.

- 1. They say prohibitions against women having religious leadership roles are the dictates of a male dominated culture in the first century.
- 2. However, God’s plan for the role of women is not based on changeable customs but creation (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:12,13 – as was already pointed out).

B. SOME ALSO CLAIM THAT ACAPPELLA SINGING IS JUST A “CHURCH OF CHRIST” TRADITION.

- 1. They assert the use of instrumental music in worship is acceptable to God because customs change and it is not right to bind man made traditions.
- 2. They are wrong on both counts:
 - a. God has specified what he wants in worship and it is singing–PERIOD!
 - (1) See Eph. 5:18,19 and Col. 3:16,17.
 - (2) To go beyond what God has written is a sin of presumption (cf. Lev. 10:1,2).
 - (3) There is no authority (see Col. 3:17) for the use of instrumental music accompanying the songs of the saints.
 - (4) Thus, acappella singing is a command of God and not a “church tradition.”
 - b. Paul taught Christians to abide by their customs—even those of human origin when such was in harmony with the will of God.
- 3. This wrong view about music arises from a failure to respect the silence of God’s word.

III. SOME MISTAKENLY BIND FIRST CENTURY CUSTOMS AS COMMANDS TODAY.

A. THE PROBLEM ARISES FROM A FAILURE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ETERNAL COMMANDS AND PASSING CUSTOMS.

- 1. Usually, it is sincere brethren who want to do what is right (as much as they understand it).
- 2. With some it is based on ignorance.
 - a. They have good hearts but have failed to study the scriptures carefully.
 - b. They may be unaware of the significance of first century customs as well.

B. WELL INTENTIONED BRETHERN HAVE INSISTED SISTERS MUST WEAR A

HEAD COVERING DURING WORSHIP SERVICES.

1. In the introduction to his article on “1 Corinthians 11:1-16; Women And Veils” brother Roy Deaver made this observation:
 - a. “I first printed this particular material in BIBLICAL NOTES of July, 1969. It has evidently been of at least some value to many thousands of people, and remains one of the most often-requested pieces of material I have ever written.”
 - b. In his article brother Deaver showed why Christian sisters are not obligated to wear hats or veils in America today.
 - c. From first hand experience my wife and I know of one congregation in Rochester, NY where some sisters felt they had to wear a hat or scarf to cover their heads during worship services.
2. They feel this way because of the teaching (“command” as they perceive it) found in 1 Cor. 11:5-10.
3. However, after further study, most members of the church realize today’s Christian woman does not have to have her head covered in worship.
 - a. Why? Because it was based upon a first century custom that reflected the fact that man is the head of woman.
 - b. The veil was a sign of submission.
 - c. To go without it was an act of defiance against man’s custom.
 - d. It was also wrong because it gave the wrong impression to others.
 - e. **VEIL**: “The modern oriental custom of veiling is due to Mohammedan influence and has not been universally adopted by Jewesses in the Orient. In New Testament times, however, among both Greeks and Romans, reputable women wore a veil in public (Plutarch Quaest. Rom. xiv) and to appear without it was an act of bravado (or worse); Tarsus, Paul’s home city, was especially noted for strictness in this regard (Dio of Prusa, Tarsica prior, section symbol 48). Hence, Paul’s indignant directions in 1 Cor 11:2-16, which have their basis in the social proprieties of the time. The bearing of these directions, however, on the compulsory use of the hat by modern women in public worship would appear to be very remote.” (from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft)
 - f. Some commentators have suggested that Corinthians would have assumed an unveiled woman in public was advertising herself as a prostitute.
 - g. There are no such connotations for women today (at least in the U.S.A.)!

C. CHRISTIANS SHOULD OBSERVE CONTEMPORARY CUSTOMS TO AVOID GIVING OFFENSE TO OTHERS (BOTH IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD!).

1. Defying a custom that is in harmony with God’s will is contentious and must not be done.
 - a. (1 Cor. 11:16) But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.
 - b. Was Paul saying it is not our custom to argue about such matters or was he

saying the churches did not allow their women to go unveiled?

- c. I think the first position is correct. In either case, the end result would be the same.
2. Paul wanted the Corinthians to know they needed to observe the veil custom.

CONCLUSION

1. Customs change with time but God's commands for Christians found in the New Testament are to be obeyed until the Lord returns.
2. If a custom is in harmony with God's eternal principles then it ought to be followed to avoid causing unnecessary trouble (contention).
3. It is possible to sin against a brother by trying to bind opinions on others.
4. We must have unity regarding "the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).
5. We have liberty in matters of opinions but we ought to have charity in all that we do.
 - a. Receive (i.e., accept) one another in the faith.
 - b. Don't judge one another in matters of opinions/conscience.
 - c. Walk in love toward each other.
 - d. Don't encourage any brother to sin by your example.
 - e. Remember Jesus is our perfect example of forgoing his rights for the sake of others.
6. Salvation from sins is obtained by obedience to "that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17,18).
7. That doctrine Paul spoke of included being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 6:3-4; Acts 2:38).

Note: All scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

Suggested material for additional study:

R. C. H. Lenski, "Women Covering the Head," in *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Edition ed. (1937; reprint, nap.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 429-43. See especially pages 432, 434-6 regarding the different customs regarding head covering for men and women in the Greek, Roman, Germanic and Jewish cultures of the first century.

Roy Deaver, "1 Corinthians 11:1-16; Women And Veils," in *Difficult Texts Of The New*

Testament Explained, ed. Wendell Winkler (Montgomery, AL: Winkler Publications, 1981), 267-73.

B. B. James, "The Women's Veil, Shorn Head And 'Because Of The Angels' (11:5-10)," in *Studies In 1 Corinthians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1982), 355-8.

B. B. James, "In What Sort Of Assembly May A Woman Pray Or Prophecy (11:5; 14:34,35)," in *Studies In 1 Corinthians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1982), 361,2.

Dan Billingsly, "Women Praying And Prophecy In The Assembly; The Woman's Head Covering," in *Studies In 1 Corinthians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, 1982), 329-31.

Margaret Bevans, "Introduction," in *McCall's Book Of Everyday Etiquette: A Guide To Modern Manners* (New York: Golden Press, 1960), v-vi. (etymology of the word etiquette)

Gerald Carson, "The Colonial Inheritance," in *The Polite Americans: A Wide Angle View Of Our More Or Less Good Manners Over 300 Years* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1966), 13.

Cleveland Armory, "Introduction," in *The Encyclopedia Of Etiquette: A Guide To Good Manners In Today's World* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1967), ix. (etymology of the word etiquette)

Llewellyn Miller, "Hats," in *The Encyclopedia Of Etiquette: A Guide To Good Manners In Today's World* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1967), 297-8. (sections for Men and Women that resemble 1 Cor. 11:4,5)

Emily Post, "Introduction," in *Etiquette: In Society, In Business, In Politics And At Home*, Replica ed. (1922; reprint, New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1969), vii, viii. (etymology of the word etiquette)

Louise Raymond, "Manners And Dress For Men," in *Good Housekeeping's Book Of Today's Etiquette* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 23. ("On entering a place of worship the average man would *instinctively* remove his hat")

Grace Fox, "Introduction," in *Everyday Etiquette* (Garden City, NY: Guild America Books, 1996), 7.

Calvin Barber, "Jesus Washes The Disciples Feet," in *The Savior's Way* (Tupelo, MS: Barber Printing, 1986), 110-2.

Tom Wacaster, "Should We Practice Feetwashing (*sic*) As An Act Of Worship In The

Church, As Some Insist (John 13:4-15)?” in *Studies In John*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1999), 483-5.

Wayne Jackson, “Command Or Culture? The Coming Controversy,” in *Rightly Dividing The Word: Volume II—Special Hermeneutics*, ed. Terry M. Hightower (Pensacola, FL: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1991), 442-9. Starting on page 444 brother Jackson points out several good examples of distinguishing between cultural conditioned actions and eternally binding commands:

- 1.) The limited commission (only to the Jews) vs. the Great Commission to all the world.
- 2.) Circumcision of Timothy vs. non-circumcision of Titus.
- 3.) Baptism is age lasting just as Christ’s promise of abiding with us is (Matt. 28:18-20).
- 4.) Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine are not culturally based since they are specified to be used *until Christ comes!*
- 5.) Christ’s teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage rests not upon culture but creation (Matt. 19:4,8—“at the beginning” and “from the beginning”).

Note: Wayne Jackson had an article entitled “Command or Culture?” in *Christian Courier* (Sept. 1990).

James O. Baird, “1 Corinthians 11:5,” in *Explanations For Some Difficult New Testament Scriptures* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Company, 1997), 51-2.

Guy N. Woods, *Questions And Answers: Open Forum Freed-Hardeman College Lectures*, vol. I (Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman College, 1976), 95-7.

Terry M. Hightower, “Must We Kiss As A Form Of Greeting?,” in *Rightly Dividing The Word: Volume II—Special Hermeneutics*, ed. Terry M. Hightower (Pensacola, FL: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1991), 450-63. The same material (basically) is found in *Studies in 2 Corinthians* (p.382-8).

David Baker, “Immodest Apparel,” in *Worldliness*, ed. Michael Hatcher (Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1999), 217-27. See especially page 220 (“What Is Modesty?”) on the matter of women wearing the veil in certain societies.

Jack Wilhelm, “The Early Church Had Problems,” in “*What’s Going On In Churches of Christ?*” (Florence, AL: Cox Creek Bookhouse, 1998), 2,3 (tract).

Brother Wilhelm had this to say: “In the first century, the Bible records unhealthy trends and flaws in some congregations as far as the human side of the church was concerned, but inspired teachers corrected the errors. God had a plan for His church, (Ephesians 3:8-12; Matthew 16:18). By learning how God planned it and noting the inspired corrections in the Bible, we can still learn His will for His church. Our modern world, by embracing cultural changes and subjective, emotional criteria, has based actions on feelings more than on rational Biblical truth. By branding Bible teaching that does not appeal to people as relative and merely a cultural issue, absolute standards of truth are eliminated.”

Law and Grace
(Gal. 2:19)
William Woodson

Introduction

I. An age old dispute continues concerning the relation of “law” to “grace” in the salvation of the souls of men.

A. The present verse is worthy of careful consideration. “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law¹, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).

1. “frustrate” *atheto* “**to reject someth. as invalid, declare invalid, nullify, ignore**” **BDAG Lexicon, p. 24**; [“make void” ASV; “set aside” NKJV; “nullify” RSV].

Judaizers insisted on the circumcision of Gentiles as necessary and thus upheld the continuation of chosen parts of the law of Moses. Paul taught salvation to Jew and Gentiles by obedience to the gospel, and thus by the grace of God (Gal. 1:6; 3:36-37). To do as the Judaizers taught was to set aside the grace of God in Christ to uphold their errant faith; such would mean the grace of God, manifested by the death of Christ, was for naught.

2. “It was a vain and profitless mission and sacrifice that Christ made if man could have gained through the law, and without Christ [,] all that was gained through him. . .If the law could have fitted him with divine companionship, the death of Christ was meaningless and vain.” David Lipscomb, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 217.

B. This contradiction between the grace of God granted through the death of Christ and the Judaizers’ demand insistence to continue observing at least some parts of the law of Moses, by demanding circumcision and the keeping of the law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5), was settled by the discussion in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1ff) and the work of Paul in particular.

C. Although this truth is recognized, those with a man-made agenda confuse people by erroneously identifying what is said about the law of Moses as being the same thing as being obedient to the gospel of the grace of God. This lies at the heart of much opposition, for instance, leveled against the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) by denominational preachers and change agents among churches of Christ.

D. The present study is directed to this issue of law and grace.

¹ With due regard for technical precision, and to cope with an attempt to mislead the unwary, it is worthy of notice that the Greek text here has “law” without the Greek article. The article does not appear in the Greek text with “law,” meaning the law of Moses in these verses in Galatians: 2:16, 19, 21; 3:2, 11, 18, 23; 4:4, 21; 5:4, 18; 6:13; it does appear in these verses: 3:13, 18, 21, 24; 4:21; 5:14. I have checked carefully, but if there is an omission by oversight, the point is clear, nevertheless, that Paul uses the article with “law” in several verses and without the article in others, and the context shows the law of Moses is meant.

II. Attention will be given to the following aspects of this subject.

Discussion

I. Salvation in Christ is by the grace of God.

A. Salvation is received by the grace, the unmerited favor, of God. Numerous verses so teach.

1. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ² By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2)..

2. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not in yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

3. No responsible representative of churches of Christ has ever repudiated these verses, denied these verses, or called on others to repudiate them. Many, if not all of such capability, have shown the erroneous use made of these verses by erroneous teachers, but these verse have been and are believed as completely as any one else.

B. Salvation is received when one obeys the gospel of Christ.

1. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. ¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18).

2. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

3. "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35).

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

C. Here our people have stood united for decades. It is only in recent years that change agents among churches of Christ have erred in calling this stance into question.

II. The law of Moses came to an end at the death of Christ.

A. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah: ³²Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: ³³But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After

these days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:31-33; Heb. 8:8-10).

B. “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace” (Eph. 2:13-15).

C. “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace” (Col. 2:14).

III. Remarkably, those forcing tension between the grace of God and “law,” usually implied as meaning any “law” such as needing to obey Christ, seldom choose to discuss passages about the “law of Christ.”

A. Consider these passages:

1. “To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law [“under law” ASV; “under law toward Christ” NKJV; “under the law of Christ”; “under the law of Christ” RSV; “bound by the law of Christ” Phillips] to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law” (I Cor. 9:21).

Cf. “The death of Christ had made him free from the law of Moses (Col. 2:14), and brought him under the ‘law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2),” David Lipscomb, *Commentary on I Corinthians*, p. 136.

2. “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” Gal. 6:2).

B. Consider parallel usage in these verses:

1. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2).

Note: :”the law of the Spirit of life” is used “figuratively, as the Christian gospel, the new covenant, as furnishing a new principle to govern spiritual life *law*” Friberg, *Lexicon* (Bible Works 5 on Rom. 8:2).

2. “Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith” (Rom. 3:27).

C. It would be impossible to explain these verses and conclude there is no “law” of any kind under Christ. To attempt such is sheer folly. But, to admit the presence of “law” under Christ agrees there is the law under Christ that cannot be in any sense the law of Moses. To exclude all submission to “law” without precise exegesis to determine

whether one speaks of the law of Moses or the law under Christ is reckless handling of scripture and false teaching.

D. Is this “law” under Christ counter to the grace of God in Christ? Of course not! At the end of the day, it is unavoidably necessary to admit there is “law” under Christ, but this law does not mean one deserves, earns, purchases, or places God in debt to him by what one does in obedience to the “law of Christ.”

Conclusion

I. The law of Christ, the gospel, blesses those who obey the author of eternal salvation; and does so not by merit, not by earning, not by obliging God to do this or that. Such is a “poisoning of the well” to misrepresent and possibly prejudice other from listening to the truth of the gospel.

A. We should expect those who would uphold what is not in keeping with the full gospel of Christ, and refuse to learn better, to try to avoid the teaching of scripture on this topic to misrepresent scripture teaching on this subject.

B. We should diligently study this subject, along with all teaching of Scripture, to better understand scripture, be blessed by increasing knowledge of the Bible, and better prepared to teach others.

The Need To Stress The Full Inspiration Of The Bible

Perry B. Cotham

I am grateful for the opportunity to again speak on this good lectureship, and especially to brother George Beals for all of his hard work, along with many others, in making all of the arrangements.

The Apostle Paul, in prison at Rome, writing to his beloved son in the gospel said, “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 Tim. 3:16-17 KJV). Then he added these words, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

The Apostle Peter wrote, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 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 Pet. 1:20-21).

These are important statements concerning the inspiration of the Bible, and we need to note carefully just what is said.

1. “All scripture” is inspired of God, and all of the scripture is profitable. “The man of God”—the preacher and all others—are all “furnished completely unto every good work” (ASV). “Completely” means “entirely”. The Apostle Peter also stated that God “hath given unto us ALL THINGS that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3, Emp. Added, PBC).
2. The word “inspiration” means “God-breathed”, or “breathed out by God”. This is a clear claim to plenary inspiration, that is, that the Bible is inspired in all of its parts. Peter was speaking primarily of the Old Testament writers being inspired by the Holy, but the principle is also true of the New Testament writers, for “ALL scripture is given by the inspiration of God”. So, From whence did it come? There are only two possible answers: either the Bible came from God—as Christians believe and teach—or the Bible came from man as infidels, agnostics and atheists affirm. Is the Bible partly inspired and partly not inspired? Is some of the Bible true and some of it not true? These are crucial questions that confront the religious world today, and we need correct answers to them.

The Bible itself claims to be from God, as affirmed by both Paul and Peter. It is our belief that it is the all-sufficient, verbally inspired, inerrant word of God. We can put implicit faith in the Bible as a revelation from God. The writers were divinely guided in what they wrote. It was not their own private ideas or interpretations

that they were giving. They were guided by the Holy Spirit. The very words were given by the influence of the spirit. Paul also wrote, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery... But God hath revealed them unto us by His spirit... Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom speaketh, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth: comparing spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:7, 10, 13 ASV).

3. When Peter said that prophecy was not “of any private interpretation”, he does not mean the readers own private interpretation. Some do not understand that Peter means that the writers did not speak for themselves; they were not giving their own interpretation; they were writing words given by the inspiration of God. But this verse has been used to support the idea that it is impossible for people to read the Bible and understand what it says without infallible aid. That means in the system of Catholicism, the Pope has the right to interpret all Scripture for their people. But “private interpretation” refers not to those who read prophecy, but to those who wrote it. Oftentimes they did not understand the things they wrote. See also Peter’s statement in 1 Pet. 1:10-12. The writers were, however, guided by the Holy Spirit. All should realize this meaning when they read their Bibles.

Fulfilled prophecies prove this fact. What the prophets stated by inspiration concerning individuals, cities, nations, and rulers—sometimes centuries before the event occurred—undeniably attests to the fact that the Bible is from God. Only one example will be given (although, many could be). Isaiah, the prophet of God, called the name of a Persian ruler and foretold what he would do some one-hundred and fifty years before he was born. It was Cyrus who would give the proclamation for the Jews to return from Babylonian captivity (Isa. 44:26-28; 45:1-4). The kingdom of Judah was not even in bondage at that time, yet Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled. And Cyrus was the ruler.

4. We need to understand that the Scriptures of these inspired men (writers) were the complete revelation of God. They are the “Holy” Scriptures because the Bible is God’s Word to us and for us. The Scriptures are the complete, inerrant Word of God, and “all things” that man needs (2 Peter 1:3). When Christ, prior to His ascension, was talking to His apostles He said that the Holy Spirit would guide them into “All truth” (John 16:14). So when the Apostle John finished the Book of Revelation there was no more truth to be given. Too, a solemn warning was given to all those who might try to “add to” or “take from” the revealed Word (Rev. 22:18-19). The Bible is complete.
5. Peter hastens to say, at the beginning of chapter 2, that in times past false prophets arose to lead the people astray, so false teachers

were to come among them in the Christian Age. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there are false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies... And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:1-2). Many warnings against them appear in the New Testament (cf. Acts 20:29-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-6; 2 John 2-6; Matt. 7:15). Christians can go astray (2 Peter 2:20-22).

6. Note, also, the value of the Scriptures to us; they are “profitable”. The ministers of God’s Word should especially know this. In the Scriptures we are furnished unto every good work. If one preaches, or teaches, he should “speak as the oracles of God” always. (1 Peter 4:11).
7. The Scriptures should not fail to be read, or seldom studied. The Bereans are commended because “they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). Peter said to new converts that they should “desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2;2); Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus that “the word” was able to “build” them up (Acts 20:32). Jesus said. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4) All that man needs for his soul’s salvation is furnished in the Holy Scriptures.

CONCLUSION

Our plea to the religious world is to follow the inspired Word of God in all things. Let us go by the Bible, and call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways. Let us restore simple New Testament Christianity. The Bible should be our perfect rule of faith and practice. (Of course, we need a faithful translation into English). But, there is no occasion for the writings of men in creeds, or the decrees of the popes of Rome, nor of any one who claims to have had a direct message from God. The Bible is sufficient. May we appreciate God’s Word and love our Bibles more, and keep close to that Word as we live the Christian life. If we will do this, then heaven will be our eternal home of joy and peace and happiness. “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa. 73:24).

Yet one can reject God’s Word to his own damnation (John 5:40). But the Holy Spirit leads, guides, directs, and indwells the child of God through the Word, by faith, and in no other way. Christ, our Savior, is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb.5:9; cf. Matt. 7:21-27). “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

Someone has written this beautiful eulogy of the Bible:

This old Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its histories are true, its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, and its decisions are Immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the sailor's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christians charter. Here Paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibilities, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

The Bible Is The Pattern – The Blueprint

Jay Yeager

My sincere thanks to the congregations of Garden City, West and Saline for the invitation to speak on this fine lectureship, and my appreciation for the subjects assigned to me.

“The Bible is the pattern (guide) – the blueprint (plan)”. Just imagine with me for a moment, the consequences of approaching this subject from the negative. What if the Bible provided no pattern to follow, no final standard to appeal to? Why, that would place man in a position of piloting his own spiritual course. I have little doubt that such a position would appeal to many, in fact, multitudes practice that philosophy even as we speak. But the outcome would be deadly indeed, and here is why:

The Bible is so much more than just answering the three big questions of life:

1. Where did I come from (Genesis 2:7)?
2. Why am I here (Ecclesiastes 12:13)?
3. Where am I going (Ecclesiastes 12:7)?

First, the Bible reveals God, and what man must know in order to worship and serve Him acceptably. A revelation that is absolutely necessary. In Isaiah 46:5, God raises a question. **“To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike?”** In others words, God is asking you and I what is there in our lives that would serve as a basis of comparison? We have no answer –God knew that we would have no answer, so He answers His own question four verses later. **“...I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me”** (Isaiah 46:9).

To emphasize the need for revelation, Paul would write, **“But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: For the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so none know the things of God save the Spirit of God, which things we speak, not in words that men’s wisdom teacheth, but that the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words”** (I Corinthians 2:10-13). Please do not miss this; you and I cannot know what is in the mind of God unless God tells us, and He has told us through men writing as they were inspired of God (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21).

Second, man left to his own devices is doomed to failure. **“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death”** (Proverbs 14:12). Beloved, do you know that this verse is repeated two chapters later with only a slight difference; that instead of which is the only variation. **“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death”** (Proverbs 16:25).

Again, **“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps”** (Jeremiah 10:23). Therefore, if the Bible is not a pattern given by God, a blueprint that man could follow, then heaven would be beyond our reach!

This lesson is intended to prove that the Bible is a pattern, a blueprint to be followed without addition, subtraction or modification (Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19; II John 9-11). The following is a brief outline of our study:

1. When men transgress the pattern (the consequences connected).
2. The Old Testament pattern limited and temporary - a blueprint for the future.
3. The New Testament pattern - a blueprint for heaven.

When men transgress the pattern (the consequences connected)

Perhaps someone is thinking, “A lot of people have stepped outside of Divine revelation and nothing has happened”. Folks, that does not mean that the matter is settled. It is such a serious thing to step outside of God’s Divine pattern! There is such a thoughtful statement in Ecclesiastes 8:11, **“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”**. In other words, God is going to let them run awhile, but there is an end to that rope. God makes it clear through inspiration that He wants us to see the end of that rope, so He has given us examples (I Corinthians 10:11). Now learn from them (Romans 15:4)!

I want to give you three Old Testament examples that graphically demonstrate how God views those who transgress the pattern and go beyond that which is written:

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took it upon themselves to do things slightly different. So each took his censor and offered up strange (unauthorized) fire before the Lord (Leviticus 10:1-2). Beloved, this was no accident. By that I mean this: they were not sitting somewhere when all of a sudden this strange fire suddenly leaped out of their censors. They thought about it – and in some way they rationalized what they were about to do. And maybe their thinking was not much different than we are hearing today.

1. Perhaps they wanted some type of a worshipful experience (whatever that is) and Nadab said, “I have a talent. I can make the niftiest fire”, and Abihu answers, “Ooo, I have goose bumps. It must be right”.
2. To go to the altar to get the fire (Leviticus chapters 6 and 16) will rob us of spontaneity.
3. Fire is fire! God looks upon the heart not the act.

Put it in any scenario you like, Nadab and Abihu reasoned with themselves and came to the conclusion that God would accept their unauthorized fire. Their death is God’s answer! It screams a warning across time that God will not tolerate those who vary from the pattern.

David and all Israel have gone to retrieve the Ark of the Covenant, not upon the shoulders of the Levitical priest as God had instructed (Numbers chapters 4 and 7). Instead they borrowed a page out of the Philistines book, and they are carrying the Ark upon a new cart (I Chronicles 13:1-8). All goes well until they cross the threshingfloor of Nachon, and there the party stops. An oxen stumbles, Uzza reaches forth a protective hand, the Lord smote him, and he died before God (I Chronicles 13:9-10).

Now, there stood David, displeased because Uzza is dead, confused because he does not know how he is going to get the Ark home, and the record specifically states that **“David was afraid of God that day”** (I Chronicles 13:11-12). Friends, may I submit to you that David had every reason to be afraid of God! David had acted without God’s authority and a man is dead.

David said, **“The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order”** (I Chronicles 15:13). There is always a due order in approaching God Almighty. The opposite of order is confusion, jealousy and factions. If God is the author of one, and He is (I Corinthians 14:33), who is the author of the other? We are not left to wonder about the answer to that question. James tells us in James 3:14-16. **“But if we have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”**. Friends, please get it! Regardless of who or how many say otherwise, whenever we depart from God’s Divine pattern, anguish, fear and spiritual death lie at the end of that road!

The man picking up sticks (Numbers 15:32-36). While Israel wandered in the wilderness, there is an account of a man picking up sticks on the Sabbath day. His actions were seen, and they brought him before Moses and Aaron and all the congregation. They inquired of God what to do, and God answered; **“The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp”**.

{Side note: Here is one of those occasions that would prove, even absent a direct statement, that observing the Sabbath day was not instituted until Mount Sinai, because Israel did not know what action to take toward a violator. Not that we are absent a direct statement that proves the sabbath day was not observed prior to Sinai; **“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And made known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant”** (Nehemiah 9:13-14). The sabbath is a memorial of deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Deuteronomy 5:16)}

Maybe some one might say, “But it was only a stick.” Folks, it is not the size that is the issue but the transgression. The point of this lesson is so profound, if we just have the presence of mind to see it. God will not tolerate any addition, subtraction or modification to His word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Galatians 1:8-9; II John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19). While justice may not be as swiftly executed today, as it was in these accounts, it is nevertheless just as sure!

The Old Testament pattern limited and temporary – a blue print for the future

The Old Testament was limited in scope (a shadow of better things to come Hebrews 8:6-13), and temporary in nature (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Yet, the purpose that it served was

essential for the hope of humanity. This study is worthy of far more attention than I can give on an occasion such as this, where there is a necessary time constraint, so I offer the following outline in a capsule form:

1. The Old Testament (Mosaic Law) was addressed to a single nation.
2. The Law was given for a specific purpose – with a fixed end.
3. The law governed Israel in every aspect of life.

The Old Testament was addressed to a single nation. That nation has a traceable line from the beginning of human history. Take a Bible journey with me that will set the matter before us. God in His wisdom provides a lineage that will enable you and me to trace this point from Adam to Moses. The first ten generations Adam – Seth – Enos – Cainan – Mahalaleel – Jared – Enoch – Methuselah – Lamech – Noah. During the days of Noah some 1556 years from the creation, God said enough (Genesis 6:5-6), and all life ended with the exception of those God wanted to carry over. All human life traces back to the sons of Noah - Shem, Ham and Japheth.

1. The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan. The descendents of Noah through Ham settled in Africa. Cush means Ethiopia, Mizraim – Egypt, Phut – Libya.
2. The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. The descendents of Noah through Japheth settled in Western Europe, by these were the Isles of the Gentiles divided (Genesis 10:5).
3. The second ten generations. Shem: Arphaxad, Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abraham.

That brings us to Genesis chapter 12 and a promise given to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). Twenty-five years later, Isaac is born (Genesis 21:5), and the same promise is repeated in Isaac (Genesis 26:4). Some sixty years later, Jacob and Esau are born to Isaac and Rebekah - twins divided by parental favoritism (Genesis 25:23; 28).

Jacob (Israel) would become the father of the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 32:28; 46:9-24), and through him the promise continues (Genesis 28:14). Jacob brought his family down into Egypt and stood before Pharaoh at the age of one hundred and thirty (Genesis 47:9). Now, who went down into Egypt? The children of Israel! Two hundred and fifteen years go by, which for the most part were spent in cruel bondage (Exodus 1:8-13), until God determined that it was time for Moses to deliver the people from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 3). Ten plagues later, the nation of Israel comes out of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12). Again, who went down into Egypt? The children of Israel. Who came out of Egypt? Why, the same ones that went down into Egypt. The children of Israel - the descendants of Noah through Shem.

Now, we are ready for two plain passages that show to which nation the Law of Moses was given: **“The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, who are all of us alive this day”** (Deuteronomy 5:2-3).

“Remember ye the Law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4). To what people was the Law given? The nation of Israel. Anyone else? No sir!

The Law was given for a specific purpose – with a fixed end

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made...” (Galatians 3:19). The law was added because of transgressions. Now just what transgression was that? Beloved, I believe there is a specific transgression that goes to the very root of this passage. In the last two verses of Genesis 26 there is this; **“And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah”** (Genesis 26:34-35).

The actions of Esau stood as a threat to the promise given to Abraham that through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). Folks, what would have happened if Jacob had done the same thing? Why, the promise made to Abraham would never have been fulfilled. God would never tolerate a thing like that, so He gave them a law (segregation with Divine intent) that stood as a middle wall of partition (Ephesians 2:12-16). The nation of Israel on one side, the rest of the world on the other side (Deuteronomy 7:2-4).

Therefore, the law had to govern the Jews in every area of their lives - socially, religiously and governmentally. The following are few examples:

Socially:

1. Relationship with others (Leviticus 19:12-18; Deuteronomy 24:15).
2. With widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22-24).
 - a. Charity for the destitute (Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Ruth 2:2; 15-16).
3. Those sold because of poverty (Leviticus 25:39-55).
4. Lending money (Exodus 22:25-27).
5. Raising up seed to a deceased brother (Deuteronomy 25:5).
6. No marriage with other nations (Deuteronomy 7:2-4; Ezra 10:2-3).

Religiously:

1. They were to love God with all their hearts (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).
2. They were to keep all the commandments of God (Joshua 22:5).
3. The tabernacle, a (mobile) place of worship – according to the pattern given by God (Exodus 25:9; 40). The instructions for the tabernacle and its contents (Exodus 35:4-39:32)
4. The temple, a (stationary) place of worship (II Chronicles 3:1-5:1). A fire from heaven signaled God’s approval (II Chronicles 7:1).
 - a. I Kings 8:33; 35; 38; 44; 48 - very likely the origin of praying toward Jerusalem.
5. Feast days - there were three feasts every male was required to attend (Deuteronomy 16:16).
 - a. Feast of unleavened bread – Passover.
 - b. Feast of weeks – Pentecost.

- c. Feast of tabernacle – Wanderings in the wilderness.
- 6. The twenty four courses of priests (I Chronicles 24:1-18).
- 7. Sin offering:
 - a. For ignorance (Leviticus 4:2; 13; 22; 27).
 - b. The sin offering and the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:10-11; 15).

Government – civil and military

- 1. Laws and punishment (Deuteronomy 21:1-23:13).
- 2. Laws for murder and manslaughter – cities of refuge (Numbers 35:6-34).
- 3. The law for those whose guilt is worthy of beating (Deuteronomy 25:1-3).
- 4. The battle in Jericho (Joshua 6:12-27).
- 5. Saul defends Jabesh-gilead (I Samuel 11:1-11).
- 6. Saul battles the Amalekite (I Samuel 15:1-9).

The law was given for how long?

“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till...”
“Till” marks the end! “Until the seed should come to whom the promise was made”.
 (Galatians 3:19). Now, we are not left to wonder what seed is under consideration. Three verses earlier, there is this, **“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ”** (Galatians 3:16).

The law was given until Christ should come, and once Christ came, the law had served its purpose. Therefore, Christ took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:12-14; Ephesians 2:12-16) that He might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body (Ephesians 2:16).

The New Testament pattern – a blue print for heaven

No printed word exists which can compare with the importance of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. The eternal destination of man hangs upon his knowing, living and loving the truth recorded upon its pages for the benefit of all mankind. The Old Testament can bring us to Jesus Christ, but only the New Testament is the final pattern – a blue print for heaven:

- 1. The New Testament pattern for Salvation.
- 2. The New Testament pattern for Christian living.
- 3. The New Testament pattern for worship.
- 4. The New Testament pattern for the mission of the church.

The New Testament pattern for salvation

Forgiveness (remission of sins) is strictly a New Testament reality, and here is why. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only cure for sins (Matthew 26:28; Revelation 1:5; Hebrews 10:10; 12). Little wonder that the Old Testament pointed to a coming Saviour, and the New Testament declares that the Saviour has arrived. **“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world”** (I John 4:14). “Well,” says one, “What about those who lived under the old covenant, did they have forgiveness of sins?”

Yes! God who loves the world would never forget the Old Testament faithful, but not because of the covenant they lived under. The blood of bulls and goats could never remove sin (Hebrews 10:3-4). Once a year they would push their sins forward, but always there was that yearly remembrance (Leviticus 16:1-15; Hebrews 10:1-3). Then how could those who lived under the Old Testament have forgiveness? Because the blood of Christ went backward as well as forward (Hebrews 9:15; Romans 3:25).

Therefore, salvation was very much on the minds of those who lived under the old covenant, so much so, that the prophets inquired and searched diligently to understand what the Spirit revealed unto them concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, but it was not revealed completely unto them (I Peter 1:9-12). The unfolding of the plan of redemption was given to them in pieces **“But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little...”** (Isaiah 28:10; 13) What was true then, is certainly not true now. You and I hold in our hands the complete and final revelation of God to man (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3), and it is the Divine pattern, the blue print for heaven!

Salvation is a nine letter word that carries with it a multitude of meanings: **1.** Redeemed (I Peter 1:18). **2.** Reconciled unto God (Ephesians 2:16). **3.** Born again (I Peter 1:23). **4.** Made alive (Romans 6:11). **5.** A new creature (II Corinthians 5:14). **6.** Eternal life (I John 5:11). **7.** Dead to sin (Romans 6:1). **8.** Servants of righteousness (Romans 6:18). **9.** Saved (I Peter 3:21). **10.** Heirs of the promise (Galatians 3:29). **11.** The children of God (Romans 8:16). **12.** Washed from sin (Revelation 1:5). **13.** The sons of God (Philippians 2:15). **14.** A royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9). **15.** Saints (Jude 3). **16.** Written into the book of life (Philippians 4:3).

Each of these terms is the conclusion of matters already present. What I mean by that is this, those things will happen, when, and only when, these things are present:

The love of God for every person (John 3:16; I John 4:7-10). That love exists to such an extent that God wants none to be lost (I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9). Does God force anyone? Never! God does, however, put choices before man, and those choices are limited but spelled out clearly.

“Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death” (Jeremiah 21:8).

“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? (II Corinthians 2:15-16).

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil” (Deuteronomy 30:15). Beloved, four verses later God expresses His desire; **“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life...”** (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Christ sacrifice on Calvary's cross. Three verses in Romans five speak of the need and magnitude concerning the death of Christ:

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

“But God commendeth His love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10).

Who did Jesus die for? He died for the benefit of all humanity, **“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man”** (Hebrews 2:9).

Obedience to the gospel. So far we have seen what God has done for us, but man is not left out of his own salvation, as though it is all left up to God. This matter is so vital to our salvation that God not only tells us what must be done to be saved, He illustrates what men and women did to be saved:

1. Every person must hear the word of God. **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized”** (Romans 10:17; Acts 18:8)
2. Every person must believe the gospel. **“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”** (John 8:24; Acts 8:12).
3. Every person must repent of past sins; **“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”... “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”** (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 41).
4. Every person must confess Christ. **“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” “...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”** (Acts 8:36-37).
5. Every person must be baptized for the remission of sins. **“And he said unto them, 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” “And why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 22:16).

The New Testament pattern for Christian living

There is a cost to following Christ. I have never knowingly left the impression that becoming a Christian is without cost, that being obedient to the gospel plan of salvation ended one's obligation to their Lord, for it does not (I Corinthians 15:58; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 12:1-2; Revelation 2:10). Rather, it begins a life so profoundly different that it changes the very essence of a person's thinking (Romans 12:1-2).

CONCERNING THE WORLD. The god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4) endeavors to blind the minds of the unwary with the promises of pleasure and riches available to any adventurous enough to pursue them. The emptiness that lays in wait when the appointment with death is kept, (Hebrews 9:27) he, of course, carefully omits. For he promises much but can deliver nothing of lasting value (II Peter 3:8-13).

Faithful Christians have escaped this world's beautiful but deadly embrace by correctly assessing this world's goods:

1. All that one has or ever will have is given by God (Ecclesiastes 5:18-19).
2. The temporary possession of material things is terminated by the grave, for we shall leave this world as we entered it, naked and with nothing (Job 1:21; I Timothy 6:7).
3. The only true and lasting riches are those that we lay up for ourselves in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

CONCERNING SELF. If I were called upon to put my finger on one single area where the cost of following Christ must be more clearly apparent than any other, it would be regarding the individual himself. For the very nature of Christianity demands a change of course: in priorities, in actions, in thoughts.

In priorities - “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness...” (Matthew 6:33). Seeking first the kingdom of God implies secondary responsibilities; such as, providing and caring for one's family (I Timothy 5:8; Titus 2:4-5), but our number one priority is pleasing God. **“If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on those things above, not on things on the earth”** (Colossians 1:1-2).

In actions - sin is that which separates men from God (Isaiah 59:1-2), resulting in a spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). If that condition remains unaltered in this life, that separation leads to eternal punishment (II Thessalonians 1:8-9). Christians have, by obeying the gospel of Christ, been made free from sin that they might become the servants of righteousness (Romans 6:16-18). In order to continue in that freedom, a Christian cannot permit sin to once again become his master (Romans 6:1-2) lest **“...The latter end is worse with them than the beginning”** (II Peter 2:20-22).

In thoughts - Christians have lived all their lives in a society which tends to segregate people into various classes. The circumstances usually determine the criteria. It may be race, wealth, education, influence and so on; whereas, Christianity exists on a higher and more noble plain.

There is no distinction in the body of Christ regardless of the color of one's skin, financial condition, educational background, or gender. All possess a soul made in the image of God and are worthy of love, support and encouragement as each seeks to serve God according to His will (John 13:34-35; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:15-16; Hebrews 10:24-25). **"...And be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"** (I Peter 5:5).

The New Testament pattern for worship

This subject will be addressed later in this series of lessons; therefore, I will simply give an outline and leave the discussion for later: **"But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"** (John 4:23-24). There are three items absolutely necessary for true worship:

The Correct Object:

1. Not men (Acts 10:25-26).
2. Not angels (Revelation 22:8-9).
3. Worship God (John 4:23-24).

According to truth:

1. Prayer (Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 14:15).
2. Singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; I Corinthians 14:15).
3. Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; I Corinthians 11:23-30; Acts 20:7).
4. Giving (I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 9:6-9).
5. Preaching (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 1:21; 4:17; II Timothy 4:2).

The Proper Attitude – from the heart

1. The proper desire (Psalms 122:1). I will be glad!
2. The proper preparation. A good night's rest.
3. The proper clothing. I will dress to please God.
4. The proper heart for worship:
 - a. I will sing with the spirit and the understanding.
 - b. My mind and heart will be with the one leading the prayer.
 - c. During the Lord's Supper, I will concentrate on Jesus and the sacrifice He made for me.
 - d. I will purpose my giving, and do it cheerfully.
 - e. I will yield to the truth when it is preached, even if it means I must change things in my life.

The New Testament pattern for the mission of the church

I want to address the mission of the church from the inside out. What one hears is crucial, for there is only one thing that has the power to save souls (Romans 1:16; James

1:21; John 8:32). So the Bible places a responsibility upon the hearer to take heed what you hear, and how you hear it (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18). What one hears is crucial to their salvation. Now having said that, what one sees needs to compliment the message they hear.

One part of the church's mission involves the relationship within the body – the strength of our fellowship comes from what each member supplies (Ephesians 4:15-16). There is a word that Jesus uses to describe that relationship, and if it is present as it should be, it will be visible for others to see, that word is love. **“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”** (John 13:34-35). In these verses we see the command to love, the depth of that love and the results of brethren loving one another as they should.

Please notice that the word “them” is not a part of this text. When we use the word “them”, it is too easy for us to exclude ourselves. “They” do not love the way “they” should. “They” do not do this, or “they” do not do that. Jesus is not addressing “them”, He is addressing **you**. Loving the brethren is not an option. To impress upon us the seriousness of this matter, God makes it clear that you cannot go to heaven if your heart is not what it should be.

In I John 2:8-11, loving the brethren is the difference between being in light and being in darkness. One chapter later in I John 3:14 we find this, **“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”** Two things will come from loving the brethren as we should:

1. When the church assembles, we will be there if possible. No one can carry out the mission of edification if they are absent.
2. A proper attitude. The world attempts to segregate people into categories. That attitude must not find its way into the church. There is one garment every member must wear; **“...And be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”** (I Peter 5:5).

That attitude will keep us from looking down our nose at others (Luke 18:10-14), because each will esteem others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3). **“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”** (Hebrews 10:24). Those outside of the church need to see that bond of fellowship!

The benevolence of the church - It is sad to see those who divide the church over its mission to help the destitute. That is a mission of the church, and they recognize that to the extent that it involves members, and it does. In fact, it is our priority in benevolence. I John 3:16-18 teaches that love in an action word, one cannot just say be warm and be filled when that person cannot be warm and filled without help. **“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”**.

No place could be clearer than Romans 15:25-26. Paul, traveling to Jerusalem to provide aid to the poor saints there, and it was primarily Gentile congregations that had contributed to that aid. Do you know that Paul was concerned? Not for his life or that he

would be robbed. He was concerned that the Jewish Christians might not accept the help, for Romans 15:31 implies as much. But these Jewish Christians received the help gladly (Acts 21:17).

That the church can and should help those members who are in need is not denied by anyone that I know. The division occurs when it is called a sin for the church to aid those who are not members of the church. Galatians 6:10 mutes the argument, **“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”** Who is Paul writing to? The churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:2) and to deny that is to deny inspiration.

The mission of the church to make known the manifold wisdom of God, Paul says it so beautifully. **“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Ephesians 3:8-11).

The mission to carry the gospel into a lost and dying world cannot be overstated. First, we must be evangelistic because we love God. Obedience to His commandments is a demonstration of that love (John 14:15; 15:14; I John 5:3). Now what happens if you say that you love God and do not keep His commandments? Then we lie and the truth is not in us (I John 2:4). Why do we need to be serious about evangelism? Because God commands us to take the gospel into all the world (Matthew 28:18-20).

Second, we need to see souls through the eyes of God. There is no price paid on our part for the souls of men, but it cost God a great deal. **“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”** (I John 4:9-10).

The salvation of souls cost Jesus a tremendous price. **“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich”** (II Corinthians 8:9). Jesus died the cruelest death to open heaven for us, and he did so voluntarily (John 10:18). Jesus became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23). Have you ever tied that to Hebrews 12:2? **“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”** What was the joy that set before him? To return to heaven to be sure, but more than that, it was to bring many sons unto glory (Hebrews 2:10).

Who did Jesus die for? He died for all men (Hebrews 2:9). We need to see the world through those eyes. The Middle East is filled with a religion of hate and violence as we all know, and we need to remember that Jesus died for them as well, lest we fall prey to

the frustration of James and John (Luke 9:51-56). In some way we need to get across to that part of the world that the way to heaven is not through Mohammad, not through the killing of innocent people, but through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

There are many different kinds of religions in this country that wear the name of Christianity, but abuse the teaching, and we refuse to fellowship those who wear the name but abuse the teaching (Ephesians 5:11; II John 9-11). Yet, Jesus died for them, and somehow we need to impress upon them that there is one church, blood-bought and revealed on the pages of the New Testament. Entrance is through obedience to Him, who is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).

There are others who are so caught up in the world that God only occasionally crosses their mind. Beloved, do you know that even the very worst are not beneath the love of God? Ezekiel 33:11 is so thoughtful; **“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked...”** We need to see the world through the eyes of God.

Lastly, we need to feel urgency; for we operate in such a small window of time. In John 4:34-35 Jesus speaks of his mission and ours. **“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish the work. Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”**

The Bible is the pattern (guide) the blueprint (plan) for man’s eternal soul. Please open your Bible, read it thoroughly and follow it completely that heaven might be your home!

The Biblical Authority of Elders

James Barnes

Introduction

- A. False doctrines, teachers, are ever attempting to invade the church (Acts 20:29).
 - 1. It was true when the law of Moses was written (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:18-22).
 - 2. It was true in the days of the prophets (Jer. 14:14; Ezekiel 22:38; Jonah 3:2).
 - 3. It was true when the savior walked the earth (Matthew 7:15; Mark 6:26).
 - 4. It was true in the days of the apostles (Acts 13:6; 20:29,30; Romans 16:17, 18; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 4:3-5; Revelation 2:2).
- B. We may expect to defend the truth as long as we live (Phil. 1:7,17; Jude 3; John 8:31,32).

I. A Current Heresy: Denial of the Authority of Elders:

- A. We should not be surprised, as this is a day of rebellion against authority in families, school, nations, and the church.
- B. We're told "no one has anymore authority in the church" as anyone else.
 - 1. Then who makes decisions?
 - 2. Does "the preacher" have any "evangelistic authority?"
 - 3. Does "the congregation" have any "congregational authority?"
Does the majority rule?
 - 4. It all boils down to "does **ANYONE** have authority?"
- C. This heresy is dividing churches. We are being told:
 - 1. "Elders have no authority; they just serve as examples".
 - 2. "An evangelist has more authority than an elder".
- D. Elders sometimes give their consent to preachers who divide churches.
 - 1. False teachers, preachers, are helpless and are held at bay when elders hold their ground (Titus 1:9,10).
 - 2. Laxity of elders is what allows Anti-ism. Liberalism, Pentecostalism, Crossroads, versions, ect., to divide congregations (Acts 20:28-32).
- E. This topic must be studied by every congregation, as a precautionary, preventive measure. "It can't happen here" is a fatal philosophy.

II. "To The Law And To The Testimony (Isa. 8:20—What Does The Word Of The Lord Say?

- A. It is so difficult to understand? Have we been wrong all these years? Are some rebelling against the ancient order? (Jeremiah 6:16; 1 Peter 3:15).
- B. The eldership is based upon wise and ancient practice.
 - 1. Among the Jews (Numbers 11:16-30)
 - 2. Every city and village ruled by elders (Deut. 25:7).
 - 3. Same with Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians.
 - 4. Same in time of Christ (Matthew 15:2).
 - 5. It is logical that the older, more experienced rule.

- C. References in the New Testament indicate the authority of elders.
1. Acts 11:29,30 – Relief sent to the **ELDERS**.
 2. Acts 14:23 – **ELDERS** appointed in every city.
 3. Acts 15:4 – Paul and Barnabas “received of the church and the apostles and **ELDERS**”.
 4. Acts 15:6 – “And the apostles and **ELDERS** came together for to consider...”
 5. Acts 16:4 – Decrees delivered “for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and **ELDERS**.”
 6. Acts 20:17 – Paul “sent to Ephesus, and called the **ELDERS** of the church”.
 7. 1 Timothy 5:17 – “Let the **ELDERS** that rule well be counted worthy...”
 8. Titus 1:5 – “Ordain **ELDERS** in every city”.
 9. James 5:14 – “...Let him call for the **ELDERS** of the church...”
 10. 1 Peter 5:1 – “The **ELDERS** which are among you I exhort”.

III. Specific references in the New Testament prove the authority of Elders:

- A. Acts 20:28-32
1. To “take heed to all the flock” (vs 28). “To take care of, provide for”.
 2. To recognize that the Holy Spirit made them overseers (vs. 28).
 3. To “feed the church of God” (vs. 28). See John 10:1-18.
 4. To “watch” (vs. 31).
 5. To be faithful to the Word (vs. 32).
- B. 1 Thessalonians 5:12.
1. Christians are to know those who are “over you in the Lord, and admonish you”.
 2. In the absence of the apostles, who would be over them?
- C. 1 Timothy 5:17.
1. Elders are to “rule”—“to be over, preside over”.
 2. To “rule well” is to be “worthy of double honor”.
- D. Hebrews 13:7.
1. Those “who have the rule over you” are the same as those “who have spoken unto you the word of God.”
 2. This is a duty of the elders (Acts 20:28).
 3. The word “rule” is the same as in 1 Timothy 5:17.
- E. Hebrews 13:17.
1. “Obey them” refers to those who “rule over you.”
 2. The same ones who “watch for your souls” (Acts 20:28). That “rule” (1 Tim. 5:17; Hebrews 13:7), and “are over you in the Lord” (Heb. 13:7).
 3. “Rule” is “to lead the way, to take the lead; to be chief, to preside, govern, rule.”
 4. “Obey” is “to persuade, to win over, to be persuaded, to listen, to obey.” This word is used in Acts 5:36, 37; Romans 2:8; Gal. 5:7; James 3:3.
 5. A derivative of “to obey one in authority”, is used of obedience to God and civil authorities in Acts 5:29, 32 and Titus 3:1.

6. “Submit” means “to yield to, give way; to be submissive”, and “is used of submitting to spiritual guides in the churches (Vine).

F. 1 Peter 5: 1-5.

1. Peter gives special attention to elders. Why?
2. They are to “feed” the flock (vs. 2). See Acts 20:8.
3. They are to “take the oversight of the flock” (vs. 2).
4. “One who instructs.”
5. Promised crown of glory if faithful (vs. 4). See 1 Tim. 5:17.
6. “Submit” means “to yield, give way; to be submissive.”

IV. Conclusion from the teaching of the New Testament:

Objections to the authority of elders is nothing less than a dangerous heresy, and is anti-scriptural. The Lord has left a sound workable plan for church leadership, which includes elders who are clothed with divine authority. Any deviation brings serious consequences.

What About The Changes In The Church Today?

Charles Coats

INTRODUCTION

To say that the church has changed today would probably be a vast understatement. Many can remember when the church was the upholder of the word of God and boldly defended God's word to all around. There was a time when we were not afraid to say we were the only ones going to Heaven, and that those in the denominations were lost. Instrumental music was what a band used in playing the National Anthem, and was never used in worshipping God. Book, chapter, and verse preaching was demanded and received. The churches of Christ were known for their knowledge of God's word.

In years past, while we knew people, worked with people, or had friends and family members who were part of a denomination, fellowship with the denominations was out of the question. We would discuss the Bible with them, but with the idea of showing them the error of their ways and helping them to come to an understanding of God's will. It was our desire that they conform to that which God has taught. The church was the unique, blood-bought institution of Jesus Christ.

Sadly, while this is still held by some, most within the church no longer hold to the truth found in God's Holy Book. The winds of change have not just crept in, but have flown in. Worldly thinking has overtaken many. "Political correctness" has become the norm. And certainly, we have been taught by many of our scholars to never "judge or condemn". In too many cases, we no longer stand faithful to God, but are wanting to be in fellowship with everyone, disguising it under the misguided concept of "love".

In this lesson, we want to examine some of the changes that have taken place in the church, and give a Biblical response to those changes. But, at least to me, we want to look at the more important issue of why these changes have come about. There is a cause for everything. Once we realize the cause, we can overcome the difficulty and the issues will correct themselves.

I. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHANGES IN THE CHURCH TODAY?

One issue that faces us is the use of the mechanical instrument of music in worship. To many in the church this is a matter of option – it can or cannot be done. It is a matter of personal preference. Although the Bible teaches us to do only those things which are authorized by God (Colossians 3:17), we still think we can teach our own views and be pleasing to God. Consider what Jesus said about this to the hypocritical Jews (Matthew 15:8,9) – vain worship is the result of teaching our own doctrines.

As to the method of praising God in song, the Bible is quite clear. We are to "speak" to one another (Ephesians 5:19), and we are to "teach" and "admonish" one another (Colossians 3:16). Further, Colossians 3:16 teaches us to "make melody **in our hearts**" to God. Nothing in the New Testament pattern of worship authorizes the use of mechanical instruments of music in singing praises to God. It is time that we began to

teach again that those who use the mechanical instrument of music in worshipping God will be lost.

The issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is a major problem in the church today. There is hardly any home in our country that has not been touched by divorce, whether it be that person personally or one of their family members. This has forced us to have to deal with what the Bible teaches on this subject. Many who divorce will marry again. When this happens, then we must deal with this subsequent marriage. Few will take the stand that God has only authorized two reasons that will allow a person to marry again and be in good standing with God.

One reason God gives is the death of one's mate. Romans 7:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 7:39 both teach us that if one's mate dies, then we are free to marry another. The person that we marry must also be free to marry again.

The only other reason God gives that will allow us to enter into another marriage and still be right with God is in the case of one putting away their mate because of that person's fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). While people are divorcing for any and every reason, God only allows one reason for divorce that will allow a person to enter into another marriage. Put simply, it is this – The person who puts away his or her mate because of that mate's fornication is free to marry another. This is the only person in a divorce situation that is free to marry again. All others are not, and we are not doing them any favors by trying to find "loop holes" so they can marry again.

Children's church is an issue that even many of the faithful brethren do not think about. This is sometimes called youth worship, junior church, or children's Bible hour. It is the time when the children are taken out of the worship assembly and go to their own assembly, where, according to its proponents, the children are taught on their own level. Few realize that this concept grew out of the bus programs that used to be so popular, and out of the denominations that have long since quit trying to follow God and his will. The bus program would bring in many "unchurched" children who had no idea how to act during the worship assembly. One answer to this was to remove them from the assembly so they would not be a distraction to others. Over the years, we have twisted the "logic" around in our minds where we can justify our actions.

The children's church concept is wrong on at least two counts. One, it violates God's desire to teach our children God's word. I will grant that it entertains the children and it keeps them amused. I will say that the word of God is used in there somewhere, so that at least the intention is to try to teach them God's desires. But, in reality, has not the children's church concept taught a generation that our worship assemblies must be entertaining? Have we not seen the fruit of this effort already in the attitude many in the church today have toward our worship assemblies? It is amazing to me that we cannot study God's word and realize that when he taught us about our children, he did not tell us to entertain our children but to teach them God's will (Ephesians 6:4). When God called for an assembly of his people for instruction in his word, he called for adults **AND CHILDREN** alike (Deuteronomy 31:12,13). Why? Look at verse 13:

And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

The second reason that the children's church concept is wrong is that it splits (divides) the assembly. God teaches us to assemble together (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 11:17,18; Acts 20:7). We say it is acceptable to divide the assembly. Whom should we believe? Lest one thinks that we are not dividing the assembly, answer this: "Are not the children leaving the assembly? Are not those who work with the children's church leaving the assembly?" Think of it this way: **You cannot assemble together separately!!!**

One other change that has affected the church greatly in recent years is fellowshipping of denominations and Christians who are in error and refuse to repent. We are taught to mark those who cause divisions and avoid them (Romans 16:17,18), and we invite them to be teachers in our colleges and preachers in our pulpits. God teaches us to not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but that we must reprove them (Ephesians 5:11), and we have joint worship services with them and join in their efforts to spread their false doctrine throughout the world. We are not to be partakers with them (Ephesians 5:9), and we have unity meetings with them. We talk about how we are all from the same heritage, and God teaches us that he that is not with me is against me (Matthew 12:30). Strange is it not that we can read one thing in God's word, do that which is opposite of what God teaches, and think we are pleasing God?!

II. WHY HAVE THESE CHANGES COME ABOUT?

The list of changes in the church could go on an on, but why have these changes come about? We do not just suddenly get this way. There has to be a bottom line for why things happen. Ultimately, there is a root cause for the problem. Please consider the following.

One reason we have the problems in the church today is that we do not have a love for the truth. The Psalmist said, "*O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.*" (Psalms 119:97). If we wear out a Bible today, it will probably be because it dry-rotted or we stacked too many things on top of it. It will not be because we wore it out turning its pages as we studied God's word. In far too many cases, we do not even bring the Bible with us when we come to Bible classes or the worship assemblies.

Another problem that has led to the changes in the church today is a lack of respect for Biblical authority. We talk about doing Bible things in Bible ways, but counter that statement with such things as "The Bible does not say we can't" or "I don't think God really meant" or "We don't have to be that nitpicky". We want Bible authority as long as it pleases us. We fail to understand that we are going to be judged by what Christ taught (John 12:48), and not by what we feel, think, or believe. We are to do all things to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31), and if we are pleasing men, we are not the servants of Christ (Galatians 1:10).

Further allowing change to enter the church today is our failure to defend the church and the teachings of God. One cannot separate the church from the teachings of God. The church is to teach the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10,11). We are to be set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:17). We must fight the good fight of faith (2 Timothy 4:7), and contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3). We are not here to make the world comfortable where it is. We are here to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

A failure to understand and uphold the oneness of the church has led to many changes in the church. Many see no problem with being in fellowship with the denominations, because they have come to believe that we are all one big happy family. They think, like the denominations, that we are all going to Heaven; we are just choosing different ways. It is time that we once again taught, as God taught, that only those who are members of the church of Christ are going to Heaven. Why? Because Jesus is the savior of his body (Ephesians 5:23); the saved are added to his church (Acts 2:47); and Jesus bought only one church (Acts 20:28). Further, there is only one way to go to Heaven (John 14:6; Romans 16:17).

Because we have been taught by the world that we need to “love everyone” and “not offend” anyone (political correctness?), we do not even offend the Devil! Because we are afraid that we may hurt someone’s feelings, we fail to teach them the truth. When we fail to teach them the truth, we will allow them to go to Hell. They will feel good about themselves, like Paul who lived in a good conscience before God (Acts 23:1), but they will still be lost, as Paul was when he was in that condition (Philippians 3:6-8).

Our failure to offend puts us in a position of not walking in the footsteps of Jesus. When Jesus taught, he offended those around him (Matthew 15:12). When questioned about his offending others, Jesus’ response was “...*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*” (Matthew 15:13,14). While we must preach the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), we must never forget to preach the truth. It is the truth that will set men free (John 8:31,32). It is the truth, though, that will divide people (Matthew 10:35-39). Give them the truth of God’s word. It may offend them, but it is the only hope they have (1 Peter 1:23).

Our trying to be politically-correct-let’s-meet-the-felt-needs-of-the-people teachers has led us to accept everyone, condemn no one, and will cause many to be lost. If we truly love the world, we will give them the information they need to go to Heaven. This will only come if we preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

Another reason we have opened up the church to changes today is because we have decided to change who God is. God is no longer the great creator and sustainer of the world who will one day judge the world (2 Timothy 4:1). In too many people’s minds, God is that loving God who will save all people, even those who walk contrary to his will. We forget that he is a just God (Romans 3:26); he is a God of vengeance (Romans 12:19); and, he is a jealous God (1 Corinthians 10:22).

Some have even declared that the God of the New Testament is a different God than the God of the Old Testament. The Old Testament God punished people and killed people when they did wrong. The New Testament God does not. At least, that is what many are trying to say today, although Ananias and Sapphira would certainly disagree with such an assessment of God (Acts 5). And Peter testified that it was the same God that raised up Jesus Christ and has placed Jesus at his right hand (Acts 5:30,31). Later, the Hebrew writer would tell us it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). No, God has not changed. And, no matter how hard we try to change him, he is still the same. We are only fooling ourselves if we think God is different today than he has always been.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Yes, the church is undergoing many changes today. But these are not good. These changes may make us more pleasing and acceptable to the world. They may make people like us. These changes may comfort us. **BUT**, this is not the point! What we have to ask is, "Are these changes pleasing God?" How sad it will be when we stand in Judgment, God opens his book to judge us, and we are not ready because we changed his will.

Biblical Acts Of Worship

Jay Yeager

Again my heart felt thanks to the churches of Christ: West, Garden City and Saline for the invitation as well as the topics I have been assigned to address. The subject of this session is “Biblical acts of worship”. The Bible has a great deal to say about worship, both negative and positive. Needless to say, God is very interested in worship, because He fully expects to be the object of that worship. He who created us wants our devotion, not in a worship that we invent, but a submission to the worship He governs. Not you, not I, but God will tell us how He desires for us to worship Him! To demonstrate how serious this matter is, God shows us how He views worship offered without His approval or authority.

Meaningless Worship

Israel was engaged in what they no doubt called worship offered unto God. On the other end of that so-called worship, God only heard the noise of their worship. ***“Take away from me the noise of thy songs...”*** (Amos 5:23). What they called worship was merely noise in the sight of God!

Heartless Worship

There are many who offer lip service to God. In other words, they say the right things, but worship that proceeds no further than the mouth is not worship at all. In words that none could fail to understand, Jesus labels pretentious worship as empty. ***“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”*** (Matthew 15:7-9).

Godless Worship

To trust in an object is more than absurd, it is useless. A lifeless figure cannot bless those who serve it, nor curse those who refuse to. ***“The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not, eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths”*** (Psalms 135:15-17).

Mindless Worship

The apostle Paul in the city of Athens said; ***“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you”*** (Acts 17:23). To attempt to worship God without knowing who God is or how to offer that worship according to His will, is ignorant worship.

True Worship

There is one worship that is stated by the Son of God as being true worship: ***“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in***

spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). While our focus for this lesson will be on Biblical Acts of Worship, one cannot speak of true worship without acknowledging that there is more involved than any one item. In fact, to omit any item of true worship is to surrender acceptable worship!

True worship must have the correct object - God

The Bible speaks of those who were so vain in their own imagination that they thought themselves worthy of worship. In Daniel’s day, King Darius was foolishly flattered at the suggestion that none should offer petitions to God or man, save to him for thirty days (Daniel 6:7). The enemies of Daniel were able to trap the king with the arrogance of his own mind, in order to have reason to accuse Daniel of wrong doing (Daniel 6:5-9).

The lions’ den, where God protected Daniel from any harm, did more than prove that God was with Daniel, it humbled king Darius who had forgotten his place. Hear him, **“I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end”** (Daniel 6:26).

King Herod, in his folly, did nothing to refrain those who cried that Herod spoke with the voice of a god, and not of a man (Acts 12:22). In short, Herod accepted their homage, a reverence that belongs to God alone. His death ought to sound a bell of warning to any and all who would be pompous enough to allow others to bow down before them (Acts 12:23). The apostle Peter faced with a similar situation absolutely refused to allow it to happen. **“And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man”** (Acts 10:25-26).

The apostle John, no doubt overwhelmed by all that he was privileged to see and hear, momentarily forgot himself and fell at the feet of an angel; however, the angel was having no part of it. **“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God”** (Revelation 22:8-9). God,, the Father is the object of our worship!

True worship must be in spirit (sincere from the heart)

The attitude of the worshipper is vital to acceptable worship. The human heart is involved in every act of Christian worship. Jesus said, **“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment”** (Matthew 22:37-38). Now, if we love God with all of our being, surely that will be evident in our worship offered unto him.

Reverence - we will have the proper reverence. In a time when reverence toward God is sadly lacking in our society, that lack is glaringly apparent in the fact that just the mention of God creates uproar in many places. Yet among us there must be that awe and reverence. **“But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silent before him”** (Habakkuk 2:20). **“He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant forever: holy and reverend is his name”** (Psalms 111:9).

Joy - David said, **“I was glad when they said unto me; Let us go into the house of the Lord”** (Psalms 122:1). There is a joy that accompanies Christianity. **“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full”** (I John 1:4). **“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”** (I Peter 1:8). When people visit and see the true worshippers of God that joy should be evident to them.

Gratitude - we are worshipping our creator, he who gave us life twice. Our souls were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), who formed the spirit within us (Zechariah 12:1). Then through the sacrifice of his Son (II Corinthians 5:21), and our obedience to Christ (Hebrews 5:9), we were born again (I Peter 1:23). We need to be ever so grateful **“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift”** (II Corinthians 9:15).

True worship must be according to truth

The Acts of Christian Worship - Giving

God the giver

1. God, the giver of the universe (Genesis 1:1).
2. God, the giver of the heavens, earth and seas (Psalms 33:6-9).
3. God, the giver of the sun, moon and stars (Psalms 148:1-5).
4. He gave the heavens and earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18).
5. God, the giver of human life (Genesis 2:7-25).
6. God, the giver of human prosperity (Ecclesiastes 5:19).

God, the owner

1. **“The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein”** (Psalms 24:1).
2. **“The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof”** (I Corinthians 10:26).
3. **“I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded”** (Isaiah 45:12).
4. **“The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts”** (Haggai 2:8).
5. **“In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind”** (Job 12:10).
6. **In him we live, and move, and have our being”** (Acts 17:28).

Perhaps you may be thinking, “What does that have to do with giving in worship?” Beloved, it establishes that we exist only because of God. All that we are, and all that we have, we owe to the Almighty who made it possible. A vital piece of

information when it comes to giving, we are not giving what is ours, but what is rightfully his.

Man, the ungrateful

1. Some men take without ever acknowledging the giver (Job 21:13-15).
 - a. God's provision extends even to the evil and the unthankful (Luke 6:31-36; Matthew 5:45).
2. Others prosper and forget to be rich toward God (Luke 12:15-21).

Man, the worshipper

1. Giving in worship offers the opportunity to:
 - a. Express our gratitude toward God.
 - b. To ensure that the congregation can carry out the work we have been entrusted with.
 - c. To obey the command to give – giving is not optional.
2. The question is how much of our income do we give?
 - a. Old Testament examples offer at least some insight into giving.
 - i. Through Abraham we are introduced to tithing (Genesis 14:17-24).
 - ii. Abraham gave a tenth part of all that he had (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:2; 4).
 - iii. That tenth part became a standard for Israel, not only of money, but all that they possessed (Leviticus 27:30-32; II Chronicles 31:5-6), even down to herbs, mint, anise and cummin (Matthew 23:23).
 - iv. The tenth was given to the tribe of Levi as they served the tabernacle and later the temple (Numbers 18:20-24).
 - v. The Levites were to give a tenth of the tithes they received (Numbers 18:26).
 - b. No police force existed to ensure everyone gave. The nation of Israel was to give voluntarily (Leviticus 1:3).
 - i. Did some abuse the giving of tithes? Yes! Some gave their leftovers and thought God would be satisfied with such, but God told them in blunt terms – you have robbed me (Malachi 1:7-8; 10; 13; 3:8). In other words, your leftovers are not acceptable.

Some thoughts for man, the worshipper

1. Giving is an act of worship. Worship means to pay homage, reverence (Habakkuk 2:20).
2. Giving is not a matter to be published abroad (Matthew 6:3-4).
3. There is no police force to ensure all give as they should.
4. Giving is a barometer of our spirituality (II Corinthians 8:8).
 - a. Show me a person's check book, and I will show you what they value (Matthew 6:19-21).
5. Christians live under a better covenant with better promises (Hebrews 8:6).
6. Unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20).

God's financial plan for the church

1. Christians are to give on the first day of every week (I Corinthians 16:1-2).
2. Christians are to give as they have been prospered (I Corinthians 16:1-2).
3. Christians are to purpose their giving (II Corinthians 9:7).
4. Christians are to give from the heart (II Corinthians 9:7).
5. Christians are to give cheerfully (II Corinthians 9:7).
6. Christians are authorized to give beyond their means (II Corinthians 8:3).
7. No congregation can rise above the free-will giving of its members.

Giving is an act of worship in which:

1. We acknowledge the giver and owner.
2. We collectively look to the God-given mission of the church
3. We reveal our hearts to the God of heaven.

A tenth? The basement of the Old Testament law would seem to me as the minimum for those who have been given so much. Please, do not lose your soul by robbing God. He has promised to take care of those who put the kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).

The Acts of Christian Worship – The Lord's Supper

There are a number of memorials given in the Bible for a variety of reasons:

1. The rainbow in the sky is a memorial of the promise made by God that he would never destroy the earth again by water (Genesis 9:8-17).
2. The Sabbath day is a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:15).
3. The Passover is another memorial of deliverance (Exodus 12:11-14; 13:5-10), the scope of which extends far beyond Egypt and Israel (John 1:29; 36; I Peter 1:18-19; I Corinthians 5:7).
4. A memorial was written to insure the deeds of Amalek would be punished (Exodus 17:14).
5. The Jubile was a memorial of freedom from slavery (Leviticus 23:23-25; 25:9-17).
6. The two days of Purim, a memorial of the failed plot of Haman against the Jews (Esther 9:26-28).

But the death of Christ is a memorial that surpasses all others. This memorial is referred to in the scriptures as:

1. The Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20).
2. The Lord's Table (I Corinthians 10:21).
3. Breaking of bread (Acts 2:42; 20:7).
4. Communion of the body and blood of Christ (I Corinthians 10:16).

There are so many things in the New Testament about the death of Jesus Christ. I offer a few for our sober reflection:

1. The precious blood of Christ was the only possible price for our redemption (I Peter 1:18-19).
2. Christ died for our sins (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

3. He bore our sins in his own body (I Peter 2:24).
4. Jesus tasted of death for every man (Hebrews 2:9).
5. The blood of Jesus can wash away our sins (Revelation 1:5).
6. Through death, Jesus destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14-15).
7. Reconciliation unto God in one body (Ephesians 2:16).
8. Jesus purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28).
9. Jesus became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).
10. Jesus gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20).
11. For our sakes, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:1-2).
12. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ (Hebrews 10:10).

The Lord's Supper was instituted by none other than Jesus himself, on the very night that he would be betrayed into the hands of those who sought his death (Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20; Mark 14:22-25). **“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you”** (Luke 22:19-20).

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

The significance should escape none. The memorial has nothing to do with his birth (Christmas) or his resurrection (Easter). The Lord's Supper was given by Jesus as a memorial to be observed by faithful Christians to show forth his death until he comes again. The elements are unleavened bread (Mark 14:22) and fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:29). How often? Every first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2), with our focus back on Calvary and the sacrifice made on our behalf (I Corinthians 11:27-30).

The Acts of Christian Worship – Singing

Beloved, the battle rages even as we speak over the use of instrumental music in Christian worship, and some among us are waving the white flag of surrender and acceptance. I frankly admit, I have nothing unique or profound to offer that would serve as a solution acceptable to all. Nor would I attempt to find a middle ground upon which everyone holding differing views could agree. Not because I do not desire unity on this point, but because there is no middle ground. Either instrumental music is acceptable in the sight of God, or it is not.

Those who advocate the use of instrumental music in Christian worship declare confidently that God is pleased with their use. If such is true, we in the Lord's church have failed to do all that is pleasing to God. However, before we rush to the nearest

music department to purchase an organ, bells, guitar and chimes, would I be labeled as overly cautious to ask how they know instrumental music in Christian worship is pleasing God? Surely you would agree that simply saying it is pleasing to God does not make it so. The Bible clearly forbids that sort of acceptance (I Corinthians 4:6; I Thessalonians 5:21).

The first and most frequent answer offered is, “They used instrumental music in the Old Testament” (Psalms 150:1-6). I am not unaware of their use in the Old Testament, which proves little to nothing, for the same ones who point to the Old Testament for justification of instrumental music, would refuse to accept other practices originating from the same source; such as, animal sacrifice (Leviticus 9), feast days (Leviticus 23), stoning (Numbers 15:32-36) and polygamy (I Kings 11:3; et al).

The apostle Paul dealt with those guilty of the same fatal error; namely, seeking justification by the Old Testament (Acts 15:1). Concerning them, he penned by inspiration these words, **“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”** (Galatians 2:5). To emphasize that point in unmistakable terms, the Bible issues a clear warning to those who attempt to justify their religious practices by the Old Testament. **“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”** (Galatians 5:4).

The study of the Old Testament ought to thrill the soul of every sincere Bible student, for God has recorded tremendous lessons for our learning and admonition (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:6-11). But brethren, the Old Testament is not our authority – Jesus Christ is (Matthew 17:1-5; 28:18; John 12:48; Colossians 3:17; Hebrews 1:1-2; et al). The serious question is this; what is authorized by Christ, and thus meet the criteria of worship according to truth? The following is a list of all the passages that deal with worship or praise offered unto God in the New Testament:

“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives” (Matthew 26:30).

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them” (Acts 16:25).

“And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto they name” (Romans 15:9).

“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” (I Corinthians 14:15).

“Speaking to yourselves 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 thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:12).

“Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms” (James 5:13).

Folks, in every single case they sang and the melody was made in the human heart. That simply means this; Jesus does not authorize the use of instrumental music in Christian worship; therefore, it does not meet the criteria of true worship, and that ought to settle the matter for every honest soul.

The Acts of Christian Worship - Prayer

By way of introduction, let us notice some of the fundamentals of prayer. Prayer is a matter of teaching; the disciples of Jesus wanted to learn how to pray (Luke 11:1). Now, this question, why did they need to be taught? They prayed in the Old Testament:

1. Elijah prayed (James 5:17).
2. Hannah prayed (I Samuel 1:10-11).
3. David prayed (Psalms 51:1-19).
4. Jonah prayed (Jonah 2:1).
5. Daniel prayed (Daniel 6:4-10)
 - a. I Kings 8:33; 35; 38; 44; 48 may be the origin of praying toward Jerusalem.

Here is the answer - Jesus was teaching something very new to them, the privilege of calling God **“Father”**, and they wanted to know more about it. Two things we need to bear in mind as we go forward:

1. This teaching is in anticipation of the kingdom (church) coming (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).
 - a. The disciples were instructed to pray for the kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2).
2. The privilege of calling God **“Father”** is inseparably connected to the new birth.
 - a. Being born again, and its necessity to enter the kingdom, are provided in the instruction offered to Nicodemus (John 3:3-5).
 - b. How, is stated in Galatians 3:26-29.
 - c. The full impact (if you will) of entering the kingdom occurs in Galatians 4:4-7.

When one becomes a child of God, they have the right and privilege to address God as **“our Father which art in heaven”**. In other words, prayer is a restricted privilege (Ephesians 1:3).

3. We are to pray only to the Father – in Jesus name (John 16:23; Ephesians 5:20).
 - a. Jesus is our mediator (I Timothy 2:5).

4. We must pray in harmony with God's will (Matthew 6:10; I John 5:14-15).
5. We must be persistent in prayer (Luke 18:1-4; Matthew 7:7-11).
 - a. That will separate the serious from the trivial.
6. We must pray to God in reverence (Luke 11:2; Psalms 111:09).

When the church assembled for worship, they prayed

Setting aside the miraculous gifts connected to the first century church, in I Corinthians 14:14-16 we find this: When the church assembled for worship, they prayed. That prayer was led, and the one leading the prayer was to pray in such a way that every member present could say amen at the conclusion of that prayer. What are some of the things the one leading the prayer ought to petition God for?

1. Thank God for the opportunity to come together and worship (Ephesians 5:20).
2. Pray for our forgiveness (Matthew 6:12; Acts 8:22; I John 1:8-10).
 - a. Notice that our forgiveness is connected to our willingness to forgive (Luke 17:3-4; Matthew 18:21-35).
2. Thank God for providing for us (Matthew 6:11).
 - a. Everything belongs to God (Psalms 24:1). To remember that will keep our feet on the ground. When we thank God for providing for us, we acknowledge the owner and the giver of all that we have.
3. Pray for those who are suffering (Hebrews 4:15-16).
 - a. God is the God of all comfort (II Corinthians 1:3).
4. Pray for those who preach the word (II Thessalonians 3:1-2).
 - a. Paul requested prayers that the word of the Lord might have free course, and that they might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. **“Brethren, pray for us”** (I Thessalonians 5:25).
 - b. Pray for more labourers (Matthew 9: 37-38).
5. Pray for the lost (Romans 10:1).
 - a. Then invite them to church!
6. Pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44). The most difficult prayer of all might be right here. What a contrast to the Jewish mind (Matthew 5:43; Deuteronomy 23:6).
 - a. Jesus prayed for His enemies (Luke 23:34).
 - b. Stephen prayed for his enemies (Acts 7:60).
7. Pray for the civil government (I Timothy 2:1-3). Pray that the decisions they make will lead to a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.
 - a. Pray for all the world leaders. If you are old enough, go vote for those who stand for morality.
8. Pray for our erring members (I John 5:16).

The Acts of Christian Worship – Preaching

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (I Corinthians 1:21).

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

“For this cause have I sent unto Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church” (I Corinthians 4:17).

There is nothing on earth today that can begin to compare to the word of God, no soul is free from the force of its teaching. Moreover, to make known the manifold wisdom of God is a tremendous responsibility that has been entrusted to the church (Ephesians 3:10-11). Brethren, we dare not fail in our mission to preach the word of God faithfully (II Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:1). The following is a sample of what faithful preaching can accomplish in the assembly of the saints:

1. The gospel identifies Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14; 18; 3:13; 18; I John 4:9), and the Saviour of the world (I John 4:14).
 - a. There is salvation in none other (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
2. The gospel will warn the lost of a judgment day to come (Acts 17:30-31), and offers them the hope of salvation (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 2:9; Matthew 11:28-30).
3. The milk of the word will nourish the young (I Peter 2:2).
4. Provides meat for the mature (Hebrews 5:14).
5. Rebukes the erring (II Timothy 4:2).
6. Comfort for the feeble (I Thessalonians 5:14).
7. Teaches patience for the weak (Romans 15:1).
8. Humbles the strong (I Corinthians 10:12; Philippians 2:3).
9. Warns us of the reality of false teachers (II Peter 2:1), and how to address them (Romans 16:17-18).
10. Commands us to keep the church pure (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17-18; I Corinthians 5:1-13; II Thessalonians 3:6; Titus 3:10).
11. Teaches us how to settle personal problems among ourselves (Matthew 18:15-17; I Corinthians 6:1-8; Acts 6:1-7).
12. Instructs us not to be conformed to the world (Romans 12:1-2).
13. Provides the platform for unity (Ephesians 4:1-7).
14. Reveals the one church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:12-16; 4:4).
15. Declares that Jesus Christ is our authority (Matthew 17:1-5; Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:18; 3:17; Ephesians 5:23).
 - a. He alone will judge the world (John 5:22; Acts 17:30-31; II Corinthians 5:10), his words will be the standard of judgment (John 12:48).
16. The second coming will occur (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).
 - a. No one knows when that will happen (Mark 13:32-33; I Thessalonians 5:1-3).
17. The gospel reminds us of what is important (Colossians 3:1-4).
 - a. Reveals what happens when we forget (II Peter 2:20-22).

18. Shows the horror of hell (Matthew 25:30; Mark 9:43; 45; 47; Revelation 14:11; 20:15)
19. Reveals the grandeur of heaven (Revelation 21:1-22:21).
20. Encourages the faithful to finish the course (Revelation 2:10).

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

How The Bible Authorizes
(2 Timothy 3:16-17; Eph. 3:3-4)
William Woodson

Introduction

“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 Tim. 3:15-17).

“How that by revelation he made known to me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” Eph. 3:3-4).

- I. These well known verses set forth several main thoughts most relevant to our topic: How the Bible Authorizes.
 - A. From 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 - 1. All scripture is given by the inspiration of God.
 - 2. Scripture is “profitable” for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.
 - 3. The result is the man of God may be “perfect” that is, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - B. From Eph. 3:3-4.
 - 1. Paul had come to know the mysteries of God.
 - 2. Paul had written about the “mysteries”.
 - 3. Those who resolved to do so could “read” what was written.
 - 4. By reading the could “understand” Paul’s knowledge in the mysteries of Christ.
 - C. In achieving the marvelous results by the means noted, there is the authoritative word of God, written by revelation with inspiration, that can be read, understood, and provide instruction to make the man of God “perfect”.
 - D. At the heart of this seeking and attaining the desired results is the topic of How the Bible Authorizes.
- II. We consider the chain of revelation and inspiration whereby scripture has the authority to so direct man and how man can understand this authoritative message.

Discussion

- I. **The Chain of Authority.**
 - A. Definition: “Authority, the right to rule, belongs ultimately to God the Creator, and Christianity is ultimately a matter of bowing to His authority by

obedience response to His revelation”. J.I. Parker, *God Speaks to Man* (1965), p. 71.

1. God’s authority derives from his being our Creator, Sustainer, Father, and Judge.
2. Jesus is recipient of authority from God.
“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*”. (Mat. 11:27).
3. Jesus endowed apostles with authority.
“But the Comforter, *which* is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:26-27).
4. The apostles received this authority.
 - a. “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”. (Acts 1:8).
 - b. “Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do” (Acts 2:37).
 - c. “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power [εξουσία “authority” ASV; NKJV; RSV; NASB (cf. 10:8)] which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction” (2 Cor. 13:10).
5. The written word of the NT has authority.
 - a. “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37)
 - b. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;” (Eph. 2:19-20).

II. How the Bible Authorizes.

A. The Bible is to be read.

1. “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).
2. “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of

them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few". (Acts 17:11-12).

B. How the Bible authorizes:

1. By commands.

a. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38)

b. "Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay [τιθετω present imperative of τιθημι "to lay by, lay aside money" Thayer, *lexicon*, p.623] by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I com" (1 Cor. 16:2)

2. By necessary inference [An inference that must be true in the light of the relevant facts in the case].

a. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25).

b. "Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay [τιθετω present imperative of τιθημι "to lay by, lay aside money" Thayer, *lexicon*, p.623] by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I com" (1 Cor. 16:2)

c. The necessary inference: These brethren had a place to meet; so may we. The place of meeting will vary according to relevant circumstance; but it is true and authorized by necessary inference that churches of Christ today have a place of meeting for the whole church.

3. By approved example under background authority. Note: The example must have background authority that is manifests for the example to be binding; otherwise, the example may or may not be followed, but it is not necessary to do so.

a. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt. 26:26-28). [Background authority]

b. "And upon the *first* day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

c. Example of observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week is binding.

d. "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea; Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:28-30).

No background obligatory authority was present to send money by two men; may do so, but not required.

4. By the accumulated teaching of the Bible on a topic.
 - a. Thomas Campbell wrote on this subject:

“So much for the first and general use and study of the holy scriptures: the second is for particular and specific purposes; namely, to obtain the amount of divine testimony upon a particular subject; by collecting together, into one complete aggregate, all the places where it is mentioned. By thus search in the scriptures, and extracting their contents on the subject of inquiry, we shall have it before us in all its attitudes, bearings, and relations, - ‘every one, acquainted with the sacred scriptures, knows that the complete account, which they contain on any article of religion, is never to be met in one place, without other subjects intermixed with it; but [p.59] is to be collected from many different passages, where the sacred writers have touched on it. All these places, taken together, do make up the complete scripture account on the subject; they contain all the light which the spirit of revelation has thrown on it, as needful for instruction. Whoever, then, will view any scripture truth, in all the light afforded, must search the scriptures for the different places in which it is contained or where the subject is mentioned. In these places it will be sufficiently explained, - enforced by all its proper motives, - applied to its proper uses, and set in every advantageous light, needful for being rightly understood and applied”. [Campbell quoted from *Gaston; Collection*: Philadelphia, A.D. 1807.] Thomas Campbell, “Church Edification,” *Millennial Harbinger* New Series 4:2 February 1840): 58-59.
 - b. Foy E. Wallace; Tom Warren.

In his book *Lectures on Church Cooperation and Orphan Homes* (1958), Tom Warren discussed the same thought by reference to a book by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *Bulwarks of the Faith*, Vol. 1, p. 38 on the subject of bible authority for the identity of the church. Warren wrote:

“He talks about the Campbell’s, and Scotts, and others trying to persuade people to abandon denominations to abandon party names, party creeds, party organizations, and unite upon the right creed, the right name, the right doctrine, and the right worship as taught in the New Testament itself; to restore the primitive apostolic church, which would be neither Catholic nor Protestant but spiritual and therefore divine. Here is his statement:
‘A few generations later it fell to such intellects as Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, the Scotts and the

Creaths, and a legion like them, to launch the mighty plea to abandon party names, party creeds, party organizations and upon the right name, the right doctrine, the right worship, such as taught in the New Testament, to restore the primitive apostolic church, the which could be neither Catholic nor Protestant, but scriptural and divine. There is no basis of Christian unity—scriptural authority.

And there is no other way to establish the identity of the primitive apostolic church. The wrong creed, the wrong doctrine, the wrong worship, the wrong organization and the wrong name could not possibly result in the right church. But the right creed, the right doctrine, the right worship, the right organization and the right name, for like reason, can not be the wrong church.’ Note that his point is: there is no other basis of Christian unity, scriptural unity, and *there is no other way to establish the identity of the primitive apostolic church!* What has he said? There is no other way to establish the identity of the church except by what? *Except by proving all the parts to be scriptural.* That’s the very thing he says. There is no other way to do it, and I agree with Bro. Wallace”. Pages 49-50.

c. The same thought from Bro. Gus Nichols.

“Any who preach, believe and practice, identically what inspired preachers believed, tauht and practiced in the first century with out addition or subtraction, or any change, will be nothing but Christians and the church of Christ is a given community...One could never produce an Austin car, or a motorcycle, by properly assembling genuine Ford parts, without change, or deviation from the purposes of the inventor of those parts, and of the Ford car. Neither can any man, or set of men, ever produce a denomination, or anything but ‘Churches of Christ’ by assembling all the parts of his teaching, as he gave it, and putting all items of his teaching and worship into loving obedience on the part of the people in a given community”. Gus Nichols, “Churches of Christ,” *Sermons by Gus Nichols and Others* (1949), p. 14.

d. And in this way the Bible authorizes.

Conclusion

I. The authority of the Bible, God’s word, by Christ, through inspired men, written in inspired words, has these characteristics:

- A. It is fixed in the written revelation.
- B. Final, there will no other revealed word from God.
- C. Forever, His word will not pass away.

II. The particular matter being studied for its right to be done in the service of God can be read, understood, and followed.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” (Col. 3:17).

Women's Role In The Church

Perry B. Cotham

From the days of the apostles down to the present time good, godly women have played important roles in the work of the church. To introduce our lesson let us read Paul's language recorded in the closing part of his letter to the church at Rome:

I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus; who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house (Romans 16:1-5, KJV).

Here a Christian woman, Phebe (Phoebe, ASV, NKJV, NASB), is commended by Paul for her many deeds of help and kindness. She is thought to have taken Paul's letter to the Roman Christians, or went with those who did take the letter. Priscilla also, along with her husband Aquila, had done many things to help Paul in his work for the Lord. Some think that the time that Priscilla and Aquila "laid down their own necks" to save the life of Paul was during the great "uproar" at Ephesus as recorded by Luke in Acts 19:21-24. The Roman letter was probably written soon after this when Paul got to Corinth (Acts 20:1-3).

It is interesting that Peter's name does not occur in the entire list (Rom. 16:1-27). It is hard to think that Paul would have overlooked the Pope, the head of the church, who according to the teaching of Catholicism was there. But was he? There is no authentic record that the Apostle Peter was ever in Rome, and we know that the Bible does not teach that he was the head of the Lord's church. No apostle ever called Peter the head of the church. Paul wrote that Christ is "the head over all things to the church, which is His body..." (Eph. 22-23); "and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have preeminence" (Col. 1:18). Too, Peter never called himself the head of the church. He said that he was "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:1), "who am also an elder (2 Pet. 1:1). He closed his first epistle by saying, "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son" (1 Pet. 5:13). The American Standard Version adds the marginal reading, "That is, the church, or the sister", meaning "a sister in the church in Babylon", and probably refers to Peter's wife, who traveled with Peter at least part of the time (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5). So Peter was a married man and at the time of the writing of this epistle he was in Babylon, not Rome. His wife was with him and so was Mark. (The New King James Version reads, "She who is in Babylon": as does The New American Standard Bible).

Phoebe, A Servant

Phoebe was a “servant of the church” in the small sea-port city of Cenchrea. It was in this area that the famous Isthmian Games were celebrated. Paul said that she had helped many. What those acts were, we do not know. Paul also said that she had helped him. Evidently, she had shown great kindness in various ways to Paul in his work and to other Christians. Paul also wrote that in 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” (Gal. 3:28). Jew and Greek, male and female, may be baptized into Christ and receive the blessings of the Lord in Christ Jesus, but this does not mean that they have equal duties, or obligations, in the church. Men have obligations as men, from which women are exempted, and women have obligation from which men are exempted. Some use this verse to try to teach that a woman in the church can do all things that a Christian man can do. This is false. All people are on the same level in regards to religion. They all become Christians on the same terms are in the same church, and enjoy the same blessing in Christ, and have the same hope of Heaven. But men can do things in the public worship of the church that women cannot do. Phoebe was not a public preacher, as some seem to think.

Women Not Public Preachers

Today the question is often being asked: “May women be preachers, song leaders, prayer leaders, ect., in the public worship services of the Church?” This is happening in some congregations today. How can the question be decided? Can this be decided by tradition, church elders or leaders, public opinion, or emotion? Some questions can be decided this way. For example, the time of meetings for public worship and Bible classes, the hiring of a new preacher, ect. But there are other questions which cannot be decided this way. Drunkenness, for example, is condemned in the scriptures (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:10). It would make no difference how many might approve, or be opposed, to the preacher speaking against it. The Bible is right on the subject.

Paul wrote to Timothy; “I will therefore that **MEN** pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:8, emp. Mine, PBC). Then he added: “Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (vs. 11-14).

Also Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak...for it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (1 Cor. 14:34-35). Women were never regarded as public preachers, ministers, or evangelists. They were not allowed to preach publicly to congregations. This was forbidden.

But women have often taught other women. Philip, the evangelist, “had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy” (Acts 21:9). However, they did not do any

public preaching. Paul, in his letter to Titus, told the older women to “teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:3-5). Too, Priscilla, with her husband, in a private way took the preacher Apollos aside “and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26). Also, they had a church meeting in their home (1 Cor. 16:19). Paul had a special kindness for both of them. At that time Christians had no large houses erected for public worship, and often met in private dwellings. Today most congregations have their own meeting houses.

This is how to harmonize the teaching of the Bible regarding the roles of women in the church. Often today women help teach little children in classes during the Bible School hour on Sunday morning, as our custom is in most churches. They often help relieve people in want and distress, they invite visitors to their homes for dinner following the worship service. Elders especially are to be “given to hospitality” (1 Tim. 3:2; cf. Tit. 1:8). Women are good to help their husbands be good elders and to have a good Christian family. Women can be great in acts of love and kindness in so many ways to help people.

Phoebe, A Deaconess

The church at Philippi had “bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). The qualifications of a deacon are given by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, one of which is that deacons are to be “the husbands of one wife” (vs.12). This would surely eliminate a woman from being a Deaconess. However, in our KJV, ASV, NKJV, and the NASB the word is translated “servant” in Romans 16:1 regarding Phoebe. The American Standard Version, 1901, does have a footnote of “deaconess” on the verse. Some of the newer, private translations of the New Testament also put the word “deaconess” in the text of the verse. The New Living Translation reads “Phoebe was a deacon”.

This was used to justify women today as public preachers, or those who work in a public way before men and women, in the worship services to lead prayers, preach, lead the singing, wait on the Lord’s Table, ect. This is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God. No woman was selected by Christ to be an apostle; they were all men. The seven who were chosen to wait on tables in the “daily ministrations” of the church in Jerusalem were all men (Acts 6:1-6). No woman was in the group.

David Lipscomb made this comment regarding Phoebe and the translation of Romans 16:1:

Some think she was a publicly recognized deaconess, but we find no recognition in the Scriptures of any such class. Many women did, however, voluntarily devote themselves in a womanly way to teaching and helping those who preached, waiting on the sick and doing whatever work presented itself for them to do. Phoebe was one of this class. Paul commended her as a Christian (Commentary of Romans, p. 264).

It is true that the word “servant” is often used in a general sense. Paul said he was “a servant of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:1). All faithful Christians are servants of the Lord (Matt. 25:21,23). Yet the word is used in this limited sense of special servants in the church, men with jobs to do under the direction of the elders (bishops) of the church, which does not include women. Men, not women, are to lead the prayers in public worship services. Women are to learn in quietness. The woman’s place in public worship is one of quiet attention. Bearing children and training them for service to God is a part of the woman’s role in the church. She should love her children and train them to be faithful godly men and women. Later they will “arise up, and call her blessed” (Prov. 31:28).

It is not wrong for women to teach the Word of God, but wrong for them to do so in a way that assumes authority over man. The reasons for this are given. Adam had super priority in creation. Eve was from him, and was formed as a help suitable to him. This was God’s original order in creation.

No Evidence

There is no evidence from the New Testament that the Lord’s church used Christian women as public proclaimers of His word before a mixed audience. In the Scriptures we read of the apostles (all men), elders (all men), deacons (all men), evangelists like Paul and Timothy (all men). References to men going and preaching the gospel takes up a large part of the Book of Acts, which tells of the beginning and the growth of the church. And men—not women—serve as elders and deacons of the church.

When the Bible speaks on a subject it overrules public opinions to the contrary. To learn the truth, with all religious questions, we must determine what the Bible teaches on the subject. When we learn what it says then the matter is settled for us.

Paul said: “I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man” (2 Tim. 2:12, ASV). He also said to the church at Corinth: “As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak” (1 Cor. 14:33-34, ASV). It seems from the ASV that the last part of verse 33 should be joined to the beginning of verse 34 and means that this prohibition was practiced by all the churches. (See also the translation of The Living Oracles).

Matthew Henry stated, commenting on 1 Corinthians 14:34:

Here the apostle enjoins silence on their women in public assemblies... They are not permitted to speak in the church... It is God’s law and commandment... It was a shame for the women to speak in the church, in the assembly. (Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. VI, p. 583).

Again, to quote from David Lipscomb's Commentary on 1 Corinthians 14, in the notes added by J.W. Shepard, we read:

No instruction in the New Testament is more positive than this...and however plausible may be the reasons which are urged for disregarding it, and for suffering women to take an active part in conducting public worship, yet the authority of the inspired apostle remains positive and his meaning cannot be misunderstood (p.216).

But, of course, this cannot be interpreted as meaning that it is wrong for women to speak (teach) or pray in meetings of their own sex assembled for prayer and Bible study. Nor does it mean that they cannot sing along with all others in a public worship service, as some man leads the songs.

However, in some congregations a new practice is beginning which uses women in the public worship services. Since there is no command, example or inference in the New Testament authorizing a woman to preach publicly or serve in any other capacity in the worship, this new practice is wrong.

Objections Considered

Sometimes people argue against God's teaching on this subject and say that this puts the women in an inferior position. But this is not true. In many ways she is superior to man, in doing her duty as a wife and/or mother. No more sacred or higher work did God ever lay on mortals that He laid on women. "Who can find a virtuous women? For her price is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). She can bring children into the world—the man cannot. She can care for and train children, as Lois and Eunice taught and trained little Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). She can obey the gospel and live the Christian life and be finally saved in heaven by the grace of God (cf. Acts 16:13-15, 25-34). Women are to be "keepers at home" (Titus 2:5, KJV, or "workers", ASV). As the home goes, so goes the nation. The women that fail to do their duty in their homes for some public work, along with men, to the neglect of their children, will cause society to suffer the consequences. Woman was created as man's helper (Gen. 2:18).

Again, in order to set this teaching aside, some have said that Paul was prejudiced against women, so what he said does not apply to us today, or that it was limited to the first century. But what Paul wrote was not caused by prejudice against women. His inspired commands reflect the will of God on the subject of woman's role in the church (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17); Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Cor. 14:37). The word of the Lord will judge all mankind in the last day (John 12:48). Definitely, the woman is forbidden to teach over a man or usurp authority over the man. Judgment day is coming.

Sometimes those who advocate women preachers in the church assembly will point to the Old Testament to some woman who was a public proclaimer of God's Word. But this does not prove that women can do this now in the New Testament times. They lived under the Old Testament, we live under the New Testament. They kept the Sabbath

and offered animal sacrifices. We do not because we live under the New Testament, a better covenant (Heb. 9).

In the wake of the new Women's Liberation Movement, the church of our Lord is encountering much rhetoric about the roles of women in the public leadership of the church. But they need to clearly understand that only men are authorized to lead in the public ministration of the church, that the total teaching of the Bible on this subject makes it plain. Paul used the Greek noun *aner*, meaning male only (1 Tim. 2:8).

There are many good Christian women today who, like Dorcas (Acts 9:36), abound in "good works and alms deeds" as she did. They contribute many things for the good of the church. What a blessing a woman like this is to the congregation. They have been made fellow heirs "of the grace of life" (1 Pet.3:7). They have in days past done a great and good work for the church of our Lord, and continue to do so today. Much of the respect women now enjoy is due to the value placed on them in Scriptures. Men and women are equal in Christ and both enjoy fellowship with God. Truly, we can say that a godly woman is of great value:

Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, shall be praised (Prov. 31:30).

The fear of God, reigning in the heart of a faithful Christian woman, is the beauty of the soul, and is in the sight of God, of great price, and it will last for ever. May God bless all faithful, godly women! May we all learn to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12;28).

To conclude our study on the role of women in the church, is their active part in a funeral service called a "celebration". In some churches Christian women participate in speaking in the service along with gospel preachers. Often a granddaughter, or maybe two of them, will step to the front and stand at the podium and take the microphone and speak for a few minutes, usually telling some funny things and jokes, which cause a lot of laughing. Then after this, the preacher may come to the podium, as he was sitting up front, and say a few things, maybe read a few scriptures, and close the funeral service with a prayer.

Would some of the visitors who are present (and usually there are visitors), go away thinking that the churches of Christ are now using women as preachers? We recognize that a funeral service, although called a "celebration", is not a regular Sunday morning worship service. But what is the impression that is made on the visitors and even the young people of the church? And what will be the tendency of this practice?

At times, for the beginning of the funeral service the woman who is also to speak will go up to the front and take a seat along with the preacher, or preachers, who are to speak at the service, and then as her time comes to speak, she will step up to the pulpit, stand and give her message, maybe along with some jokes and laughing from her. The audience laughs also.

Where will all this lead to within the next few years? What should be the attitude of the elders of the church regarding this practice?

Also, if some of the family want to use instruments of music at the funeral, they will go to the funeral home chapel and there some of the granddaughters will sing a song or two, with the instrument. They usually say this was a song that grandmother loved. Is this scriptural?

May God help us to abide by His word.

Love the Brotherhood and All: An Exegesis of
1 Corinthians 13 and How It Applies Today
Bruce Harris

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

Love or Miracles?

Which is greater? Love? Or miraculous spiritual gifts? The answer would appear to be obvious. But it seems that some of the Corinthian brethren did not perceive the obvious and were attaching greater importance to the gifts. Paul addresses the issue in **1 Corinthians 12-14**. In chapter 12 the apostle discourses on the place of spiritual gifts in their relation to the body of Christ, the church. In chapter 14 he details the role of the gifts in communicating and confirming God's word, especially in the setting of an assembled congregation of God's people. In chapter 13 he defines the subordinate position of the miraculous gifts in the divine scheme of things by contrasting their spiritually infantile and temporary nature with the excellence and permanence of love.

Without Love...Nothing

1 Corinthians 13:1-3: According to the Bible, true love involves more than just good intentions. It is in fact defined by actions which are prescribed by God in his word: **“Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).** **“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:2-3).** **“And if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:9-10).** On the other hand, if those divinely prescribed actions are not motivated by love, they become vain attempts to placate God despite whatever good may flow out from them to others. Paul himself was glad for the good that resulted from gospel preaching done by certain brethren whose preaching was not motivated by love (**Philippians 1:15-18**). However, because of their envious aims (**1 Corinthians 13:4 – “charity envieth not”**) it profited them nothing. It is possible to do an otherwise noble deed for an ignoble reason, and while the road to hell may be “paved with good intentions”, so is the road to heaven! God in his word is a discerner of **“the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12)**. We must do what is right, and we must do so for the right reasons. Love is the greatest reason for which to do anything.

The Excellence of Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-7: Why did Paul select these particular fifteen characteristics of love? Are there not additional traits he could have mentioned just as easily? Without denying the obvious universal application of the chosen qualities, it is interesting to observe how perfectly suitable they were to the situation at hand there in Corinth. In the brethren’s excitement over the gifts, it might have been easy to leave love out. It could have been tempting for someone to envy another who possessed what was considered a better gift, but love **“envieth not” (v. 4)**. Perhaps while waiting to utilize one’s gift in the church, enough patience was not exercised by that person in order for the previous speaker to finish before interrupting, but again love **“suffereth long”** and **“doth not behave itself unseemly” (vv. 4-5)**. Or perhaps it wasn’t a matter of patience at all, but instead a matter of pride. Maybe there was a brother who simply thought he was more important than the rest and interrupted, or wouldn’t yield the floor, for that reason. However, love **“vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,...seeketh not her own” (vv. 4-5)**. Even brethren who did not possess a gift were not immune from failing to behave consistently with love. One of the purposes for the miraculous gifts was to communicate

God's will to man (**1 Corinthians 14:6**). If any brother or sister were to dislike a certain truth being revealed through the spiritual gifts, it would be entirely appropriate to remind them that love “**rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things**” (vv. 6-7).

The Permanence of Love

1 Corinthians 13:8-12: While the spiritual gifts would eventually come to an end, love would never do so. Thus, love is greater because of its permanence. Those who want miracles to continue today would do well simply to read and then believe what inspiration asserts on this subject in this portion of scripture. Remember, love “**believeth all things**” (v. 7). **1 Corinthians 13:8** hammers home with loving clarity the approaching end of miraculous powers: “**Whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away**”. Three times in this verse, in three different ways, using three representative gifts, the Bible makes clear that miraculous powers were going to come to an end. **1 Corinthians 13:9** gives the reason for their ‘demise’: “**For we know in part, and we prophesy in part**”. The purpose for which the Spirit of God distributed miraculous ability among God's people was to communicate and confirm God's word (**1 Corinthians 14:6,22**), and until that job was completed people only had access to an incomplete or partial, i.e. “**in part**”, revelation of God's will. They needed the power because the Bible was not complete, and during such a time that was God's way of getting his word into the world. Thus, when the time ever arrived that divine revelation was complete, the spiritual gifts would no longer be needed. Therefore, **1 Corinthians 13:10** makes it crystal clear as to when these gifts would cease: “**But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away**”. When the revelation of God's word was complete, because in context that's what “**that which is perfect**” means, spiritual gifts came to an end. Friend, either the Bible is complete or it's not. If it's complete, miracles do not take place. If it's not, then who will be so bold as to add the next book to it?

The Supremacy of Love

1 Corinthians 13:13: According to scripture, “**without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him***” (**Hebrews 11:6**) and “**we are saved by hope**” (**Romans 8:24**). Faith and hope, like love, are fundamental in our response to the Lord, but only love is a trait we can actually have in common with God. The Lord

doesn't believe or have hope. But **"God is love"** and **"We love him because he first loved us"** (1 John 4:16, 19). It wasn't faith or hope that moved the Lord to save us from our sins, but it was **"his great love wherewith he loved us"** (Ephesians 2:4). Also, while it is possible to believe and be lost (James 2:26), where there is true love for God there will be faith and salvation (John 14:23). Furthermore, when hope eventually disappears in the realization of everlasting life (Romans 8:24), love will never fail or fade away.

Love Applies Universally

Despite the fact that the apostle's wonderful lesson on love is woven into his discussion of the spiritual gifts limited to that time, make no mistake about it, its application is universal. It is universal first, in that it applies to all people, Christian or not. Jesus announced, **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"** (Matthew 28:18), and his ambassador Peter likewise affirmed, **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12). So, since **"sin is not imputed when there is no law"** (Romans 5:13), and the Bible plainly states that **"all have sinned"** (Romans 3:23), it therefore clearly is the case that **"all"** are under and accountable to **"the law of Christ"** (Galatians 6:2).

Second, Paul's lesson on love is universal in that it applies today as well as then. People can envy and be puffed up nowadays just like they could then. Furthermore, Paul made it clear from the first chapter that what he had to say in this epistle was for the benefit of not just that congregation, but **"all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord"** (1 Corinthians 1:2). Plus, it was the very permanence of love in God's scheme of redemption, in contrast to the explicitly stated temporary nature of spiritual gifts, which the apostle utilized to show the superiority of love (1 Corinthians 13: 8-10). Therefore, while spiritual gifts do not apply today, love does.

Third, the universal application of love means that we love both saint and sinner, both the brotherhood and all men. Of all things taught in God's word, this is one of the most clear: **"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you"** and **"if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*?"** (Matthew 5:44, 47). Again, **"Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood"** (1 Peter 2:17). And again, **"Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers"** (Hebrews 13:1-2). Once more, **"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward**

another, and toward all *men*” (1 Thessalonians 3:12). And finally, **“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”** (Galatians 6:10). According to the preceding verses, love is to be applied to all people. Therefore, if it is a matter of love to feed a hungry saint, then it is also a matter of love to feed a hungry sinner. To conclude otherwise is beyond me, but more importantly it is beyond the plain import of these passages.

Speaking the Truth in Love

In view of the lectureship theme, it is entirely fitting to close by considering how love should be applied to the way we handle religious and doctrinal issues, both among ourselves as well as with those we are trying to reach from without. In applying love in these situations, we will honor and adhere to all that the Bible requires of us in the matter of love: **“If ye love me, keep my commandments”** (John 14:15).

There are two extremes that we want to be sure to avoid, two ditches along either side of the straight and narrow, that we do not want to fall into. In the words of the Lord to Joshua, **“Turn not from it *to the right hand or to the left*”** (Joshua 1:7). First, we do not want to fall into the ditch of compromise with error, whether it be by way of embracing it ourselves, or by way of failure to respond to it in the preaching and teaching of others. Remember, love **“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth”** (1 Corinthians 13:6). Second, we do not want to fall into the ditch of misjudging, mistreating, or even harboring resentment toward people with whom we disagree. Remember again, love **“suffereth long, *and is kind;...envieth not*”** (1 Corinthians 13:4). **“Speaking the truth in love”** (Ephesians 4:15) will insure that we avoid the ditch on either side.

The first loving thing we can do when it comes to handling issues, is to distinguish between those that are matters of faith and those that are matters of opinion. Although some would prefer to live in a spiritual dream world where divergence in doctrine is no more than “a matter of interpretation”, the Bible is clear that **“many false prophets are gone out into the world”** (1 John 4:1), and that **“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man but, the end thereof *are the ways of death*”** (Proverbs 14:12). At the same time, we also need to recognize God’s allowance for differences of opinion in areas where disagreement does not result in ruptured fellowship (Romans 14:1-4). Not every disagreement is grounds for discipline. To be able to draw the necessary conclusions as to when disagreements matter and when they do not, we must **“Study...rightly dividing the word of truth”** (2 Timothy 2:15). More serious attention

devoted to this fundamental expression of love toward others will **“cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8)**, and eliminate many problems before they begin.

The second thing we can do is be willing to follow God’s plan for dealing with error when it really does occur. Following are some of heaven’s directives that many find distasteful to say the least, and think to be lacking in love at worst. When error appeared in Antioch, Paul **“gave place by subjection, no not for an hour”** and **“withstood [Peter] to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Galatians 2:5, 11)**. In the same epistle he instructed the brethren, **“If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Galatians 6:1)**. To Titus he wrote, **“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10-11)**. And to the church at Rome he besought, **“Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18)**. We need to make sure to apply these passages to the right people, at the right time, on the right occasion. But we do need to apply them, trusting God as to the results.

The third thing we can do in the matter of issues, is maintain the proper loving attitude toward those with whom we disagree, whether the disagreement is a matter of error or simply opinion. In cases of opinion Paul reminds, **“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?” (Romans 14:10)**. In matters of error as well, we must remember to love the soul taken captive by it. Paul summarizes this side of love’s coin in these words: **“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves...that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26)**; and those to Titus: **“Put them in mind...to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived” (Titus 3:1-3)**. Without argument the loving sentiments of **1 Corinthians 13** apply when dealing with issues, opinion or otherwise: **“Charity suffereth long, and is kind,...Doth no behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (vv. 4-5)**. It is not difficult to see where the application of these loving virtues can make a big difference in the way issues are handled among those who disagree, but who still love the other and want nothing more than to save and be saved.

Bible Silence Forbids
(Matt. 28:18-20)
William Woodson

Introduction

- I. This passage is worthy of careful study for many reasons.
 - A. Instruction on the Godhead, the plan of salvation, importance of evangelism
 - B. Additional topic: The Silence of Scripture
 - 1. The authority of Jesus is stated in v. 18.
“All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth”
Head of church, example for life, high priest, etc.
 - 2. Authority manifested in the instruction given about teaching in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - C. Authority is manifested in further instruction: “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”
 - 1. “All things,” not just so called essentials, or whatever one may prefer.
 - 2. Note” “all things” Jesus “commanded.”
 - D. This truth lies at the heart of our study.
- II. Note: Definition, Defense, and Distinction or Avoidance of distortion.

Discussion

- I. Definition of “Silence of Scripture.”
 - A. Often stated: We are to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.”
 - B. This principle lies behind several distinctive aspects of our heritage.
 - 1. Refuse instrumental music
 - 2. Refuse to sprinkle or pour water as “baptism”
 - 3. Refuse to “baptize” infants
 - 4. Refuse to have woman to preach, lead public prayer, etc.
 - C. I propose the following definitions:
 - 1. “To speak where the Bible speaks” is to believe and practice in becoming a Christian, in the Christian life, and in the worship and work of the church what is authorized by scripture.
 - a. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:17).
 - b. This is the clear meaning of: “If any man speak, *let his speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified

- through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (I Pet. 4:11).
2. “To be silent where the Bible is silent” is to refuse to believe and practice in becoming a Christian, in the Christian life, and in the worship and work of the church what God has not authorized.
 - a. There is no authority in the NT to use instrumental music in the worship of the church today; we refuse to use it.
 - b. There is no authority to sprinkle or pour water instead of immersing in water in baptism; we refuse to do it.
 - c. So with “baptizing” infants, having women to preach, etc.
 - d. This definition is manifest in such verses as:
 1. “Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch” (Gen. 6:14).
 2. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.²⁷ And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;²⁸ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:26-28).

II. Defense of the silence argument

A. In this passage:

1. Jesus said to “go.” If we respect this statement, we will “go”.
2. Jesus said “teach all nations” [Mark: “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15)]. This is to be done.
3. There is no teaching that any apostle or other inspired man ever: refused to go and teach, used instrumental music in worship, sprinkled or poured water as “baptism,” sprinkled water on infants as a salvation act, had women to lead prayer or preach in a public worship service.
4. “Everyone should know that the meaning of this well known motto is that we practice that which the Bible authorizes and we decline to practice that which the Bible does not authorize.” G. C. Brewer, *Medley on the Music Question* (1946), p. 35.

B. Three verses showing the silence of Scripture forbids doing what is not authorized.

1. “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1).
 - a. The word translated “strange” is *zarah* “strange fire” KJV; ASV; “unholy” RSV; “profane” NKJV; [Although I usually do not appeal to the NIV, it renders: “unauthorized” fire and does the same for the same Hebrew word *zarah* “unauthorized” in Num. 3:4; 26:61).

- b. *zarah* Several lexicons: HALOT “strange = prohibited. . .illegitimate, prohibited fire Lv 10₁ Nu 26₆₁” Bible Works 5 on Lev. 10:1; BDB, Lexicon “opposed to true, right, lawful, strange, i.e. unlawful. . .strange fire i.e. unlawful, profane, opposed to sacred fire, Lev. 10:1; Num. 3:4; 26:61”, p. 276; Koehler and Baumgartner, Lexicon “3. strange = prohibited. . .illegitimate, prohibited fire Lv10₁ Nu 3₄ 26₆₁” p. 276.
 - c. God’s word was silent as to the kind of fire they offered; no authority for it to be used. Thus it was “illegitimate, prohibited”.
 - d. In matters of the worship of God and service of God, what is not authorized is forbidden.
2. “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Heb. 1:5).
 - a. No verse so spoke of angels, but there was this truth about His Son, cf. Ps. 2:7 (Acts 13:33); II Sam. 7:14.
 - b. It was forbidden, prohibited, wrong to speak of an angel as God did of his Son.
 3. Jesus was a priest after the order of Michizedek, of the tribe of Judah, not of the tribe of Judah:
 - a. “For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:14).
 - b. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12).
 - c. Jesus was prohibited from, forbidden from serving as a priest after the order of Levi.

III. Distinction or Avoidance of Distortion

- A. There is and has been a tendency to add preferred wishes, man’s wisdom, this or that individual, to add to the word of God and thus distort the truth of God.
 1. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2).
 “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deut. 12:32).
 2. “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5).
- B. Some examples from our heritage: no Bible classes, no women teachers for children or ladies; no individual communion cups, no support of orphan homes or children from the treasury; no kitchen in the building; must kneel in prayer; no located preachers, etc.
- C. The rejection of these and similar added demands rests on the distinction from the kinds of authorizing instruction from God.
 1. Clarification:

- a. Specific authority: go, teach, baptize. Must not take away, add to.
 - b. General [generic] authority: methods of going, of teaching, place for baptism, etc.
- 2. One must study carefully each particular matter under consideration and learn from the context and word meaning whether the instruction is specific or general.
- 3. Also, it is to be noted that instruction may be specific as to one aspect of what is involved but general as to another.
 - a. “Baptize” is specific as to the action involved, but is general as to the container of the water, whether a stream, a pool, a baptistery, etc.
 - b. “Teach” or “preach” is specific as to content of instruction, but general as to manner of presenting the instruction. That is, the gospel is to be preached or taught; but various methods are possible: speaking with or without public address system; using overhead projector, power point, etc.
- 4. Study of “sing” in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16.
 - a. As to type of music, whether vocal or instrumental, the verses are specific; to sing; no authority to play any instrument in service.
 - b. As to how the words being sung are known so as to sing them, one may sing from memory, “lining” the words, use overhead projection in power point; have a song book with many songs, etc. Also, how many verses, how fast or slow, how many songs, etc., are matters of general authority and are to be left to the wisdom and judgment of those in oversight and direct involvement.
 - c. In matters of general authority, one must not distort the thought of silence of Scripture to forbid what God has allowed, such as to forbid using a song book. To do so is to convert general authority into specific authority.
 - d. In matters of specific authority, such as baptism for the remission of sins, it is distorting Scripture to contend that since remission of sins is required, it is required that a certain version of Scripture only must always be used; or since the type of container for the water is not required, baptism for the remission of sins is optional and not required.

Conclusion

The teaching of these and other verses about authority, whether specific or general, is of much importance.

A. To properly understand the significance and application of these thoughts is to see the way of avoiding much misunderstanding and distortion of Scripture by the distortion of Scripture to the harm of the peace and unity of the church.

B. Not only are these matters right by the Bible, they are important to learning much about the life and work of the church.

How You Can Identify THE New Testament Church?

Michael Golwitzer

Thesis: Jesus Christ identified His church that shall last forever with the blood bought name, organization, worship, fellowship, and entrance unlike any man made religion.

Key words: Distinctive Identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. It is a genuine joy and an encouragement to participate in the Michigan Bible Lectureship. Gratitude is rendered to the faithful congregations that sponsor this lectureship and all that had a part in bringing it to fruition. I am confident that all who attend in person and by Internet will greatly benefit. We appreciate the work of the lectureship director brother George Beals, director of Online Academy of Biblical Studies brother Tom Bright, and technical help of brother Ted Thrasher to ensure these lessons live on for many years made available to anyone in the world with a computer and access to the Internet. God only knows the far-reaching effect of the lessons presented this week to honest souls diligently seeking Him (Heb. 11:6).
- B. Upon the confession of Peter that “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16, King James Version) Jesus Christ said: “I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18 All following references are from the King James Version). The rock is the confession that Christ is the Son of God. Please look carefully at the words “my church.”
1. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines “my” as “of or relating to me or myself especially as possessor, agent, or object of an action <my car> <my promise> <my injuries>” and “church” as “a body or organization of religious believers”
 2. Strong’s Greek Lexicon defines “my” as mou {moo}3450- I, me, my, of me. And “church” as ekklesia {ek-klay-see'-ah}1577 - an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting, the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth (Strong’s Greek Lexicon (On Line) 1992).
 3. E-sword: G1577 ekklesia (*ek-klay-see'-ah*) From a compound of G1537 and a derivative of G2564; a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church.
- C. The words “my church” clearly shows one church belonging to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must identify the church that Jesus Christ built and diligently seek it.
- D. **Illustration: Identity Theft.**

1. Identity-Theft is the fastest growing crime in America; 9.9 MILLION victims were reported last year, according to a Federal Trade Commission survey!²
2. The Federal Trade Commission has a website dedicated to Identity Theft indicating the magnitude of the problem. It says: "While there are no guarantees about avoiding identity theft, there are steps you can take to minimize your risk and minimize the damage if a problem occurs:
 - a. **Deter** identity thieves by safeguarding your information.
 - b. **Detect** suspicious activity by routinely monitoring your financial accounts and billing statements.
 - c. **Defend** against ID theft as soon as you suspect a problem.³
3. How can someone steal my identity? Despite your best efforts to manage the flow of your personal information or to keep it to yourself, skilled identity thieves may use a variety of methods to gain access to your data.
 - a. They get information from businesses or other institutions by:
 - stealing records or information while they're on the job
 - bribing an employee who has access to these records
 - hacking these records
 - conning information out of employees
 - b. They may steal your mail, including bank and credit card statements, credit card offers, new checks, and tax information.
 - c. They may rummage through your trash, the trash of businesses, or public trash dumps in a practice known as "dumpster diving."
 - d. They may get your credit reports by abusing their employer's authorized access to them, or by posing as a landlord, employer, or someone else who may have a legal right to access your report.
 - e. They may steal your credit or debit card numbers by capturing the information in a data storage device in a practice known as "skimming." They may swipe your card for an actual purchase, or attach the device to an ATM machine where you may enter or swipe your card.
 - f. They may steal your wallet or purse.
 - g. They may complete a "change of address form" to divert your mail to another location.
 - h. They may steal personal information they find in your home.
 - i. They may steal personal information from you through email or phone by posing as legitimate companies and claiming that

² [Identity Theft Prevention and Survival](http://www.identitytheft.org/), (<http://www.identitytheft.org/>, Retrieved: 6/18/06)

³ Federal Trade Commission, (<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft>, Retrieved: 6/18/06)

you have a problem with your account. This practice is known as "phishing" online, or pretexting by phone.⁴

- E. The devil is the master of identity theft, especially when it comes to the church of Christ. We will examine the true identity of the church of Christ and the wiles or devices of the devil (Eph. 6:11; 2 Cor. 2:11). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1). His devices are much like the tactics described above: “...stealing truth...” and “...by posing as legitimate companies (church-emp mine) and claiming that you have a problem (causing discontent-emp. mine)...” The steps to deal with the problem are also similar: **Deter, Detect, and Defend.**

II. DISCUSSION

A. Beginning.

1. The church of Christ’s beginning was the first Pentecost after the ascension of Christ: Daniel 2:44, 7:13-14; Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4,47; 11:15.
2. The church of Christ began in Jerusalem: Isa. 2:2-3; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; and Acts 2.
3. The identity theft of the church’s beginning.
 - a. Some have declared that the church began in 1809 by Alexander Campbell.⁵ This is nearly 1776 years too late since the church began about 33 AD.
 - b. Some have declared that the church was founded in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in 622 AD by Muhammad, an Arabian camel driver.⁶ This is nearly 600 years after the beginning of the church and not in Jerusalem.
 - c. Since its organization in 1845 in Augusta, Georgia, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has grown to over 16 million members who worship in more than 42,000 churches in the United States. Southern Baptists sponsor about 5,000 home missionaries serving the United States, Canada, Guam and the Caribbean, as well as sponsoring more than 5,000 foreign missionaries in 153 nations of the world. The term "Southern Baptist Convention" refers to both the denomination and its annual meeting. You become a Southern Baptist by uniting with a Southern Baptist church, one in friendly cooperation with the general Southern Baptist enterprise of reaching the world for Christ. Typically church membership is a matter of accepting Jesus as your Savior and

⁴ Federal Trade Commission, (<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft>, Retrieved: 6/18/06)

⁵ Thomas Campbell, Declaration and Address (First Edition, 1809), (<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/da/DA-1ST.HTM>, Retrieved: 6/18/06)

⁶ Fast Facts on Islam, (<http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/fastfacts.htm> published: 3/17/04, updated: 7/25/05)

Lord and experiencing believer's baptism by immersion.⁷
1845 is not the proper time the church began nor is Augusta,
Georgia the proper place.

B. Builder

1. The church of Christ's builder is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the church and no other: Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18.
2. The identity theft of the church's builder.
 - a. Baha'i Faith, Founded by Bahá'u'lláh, 1863, Tehran, Iran.
 - b. Religious Facts: "For the first thousand years of Christian history, there were no "denominations" within the Christian church as there are today"⁸
 - c. Buddhism. Founded by Siddharta Gautama (the Buddha) in c. 520 BC, NE India.
 - d. Cao Dai. Founded in 1926, Vietnam by Ngo Van Chieu and others based on a séance.
 - e. Christian Science. Founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879, Massachusetts.
 - f. Confucianism. Founded by Confucius (551–479 BC), China
 - g. Deism. Especially popularized in the 18th-cent. Enlightenment under Kant, Voltaire, Paine, Jefferson, and others
 - h. Eckankar. Founded by John Paul Twitchell in 1965, Las Vegas.
 - i. Falun Gong. Founded by Li Hongzhi in 1992 in China.
 - j. Freemasonry. Scotland. Grand Lodge of England founded 1717.
 - k. Islam. Founded by Muhammad in 622 AD, Saudi Arabia.
 - l. Jehovah's Witnesses. Founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1879, Pittsburgh.
 - m. Mormonism. Joseph Smith, 1830, New York.
 - n. Scientology. Founded by L. Ron Hubbard in 1954, California.
 - o. Zoroastrianism. Founded by Zoroaster in c.6th cent. BC, Persia. Official religion of ancient Persia.
 - p. Baptist. John Smyth and the Separatists. In 1609.
 - q. "For the first thousand years of Christianity there was no "Roman Catholicism" as we know it today" Quote from Religious Facts.
 - r. Presbyterians are indebted to John Calvin and Reformed theology
 - s. John Knox and the Church of Scotland

⁷ Southern Baptists, <http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/default.asp>, Retrieved: 6/18/06

⁸ [ReligionFacts](http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/history.htm), A. Brief History of Denominations, 2004-2006

(<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/denominations/history.htm>, Retrieved 6/22/06)

- t. Anglicans and Episcopalians trace their heritage to the Church of England that resulted from King Henry VIII's break from the authority of Rome.
- u. Methodist/ Wesleyan. John Wesley of England, 1787.
- v. On and on man continues to build churches upon men. God gave all authority to Jesus Christ. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). (John 10:29; Col. 2:8)

C. Foundation

1. The church of Christ's foundation is Jesus Christ: 1 Cor. 3:11. He purchased it with His precious blood: Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5
2. The identity theft of the church's builder.
 - a. Some have declared that the church was built upon the foundation of the Catholic Church, denominations, Protestants, or men (see partial list in paragraph D). All such foundations will be destroyed "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).
 - b. Some have taught that the church was not upon Jesus Christ and that He was just a prophet or some religious man but not the Christ and Messiah. They are agnostic. The word agnostic means "without knowledge." The agnostic does not boldly proclaim that God does not exist. Instead, he suggests no one can know whether or not God exists because there simply is not enough evidence upon which to base a conclusion. In essence, then, agnosticism says: "I don't know, you don't know, nobody knows, and nobody can know if there is a God." Agnostics frequently point out that man cannot know everything, and that he never has been able to "detect" God with his limited mind and capabilities...The agnostic's claim of "I can't know" really is a mask that he puts on to hide the fact that he realizes there is ample evidence (that he can neither explain away nor disprove) to establish the existence of God. Perhaps the agnostic cannot find God for the same reason a thief cannot find a policeman!⁹ The writings of The Gospel of Ruth, *The Da Vinci Code* and The Gospel of Judas are products of Agnostics from 200 to 400 AD.

D. Name

1. The church of Christ's name is distinctive: Rom. 16:16; Isa. 62:1-2; Acts 9:15, 11:25-26; 1 Pet. 4:16.
2. The identity theft of the church's name.

⁹The Many Faces and Causes of Unbelief, (Apologetics Press, Inc. 2001), http://www.apologeticspress.org/pdfs/courses_pdf/hsc0101.pdf , Date: 12 Nov 2004

- a. The Greek roots of the term "Catholic" mean "according to (*kata-*) the whole (*holos*)," or more colloquially, "universal." At the beginning of the second century, we find in the letters of Ignatius the first surviving use of the term "Catholic" in reference to the Church. At that time, or shortly thereafter, it was used to refer to a single, visible communion, separate from others. Ignatius of Antioch, "Let no one do anything of concern to the Church without the bishop. Let that be considered a valid Eucharist, which is celebrated by the bishop or by one whom he ordains [i.e., a presbyter]. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people be there; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church" (*Letter to the Smyrneans* 8:2 [A.D. 110]).¹⁰ The name "Catholic" is man made and therefore not the true church.
- b. Some call themselves "Lutheran." "Do Lutherans believe theirs is the only true religion?" This question was once put to the late Dr. Elson Ruff, editor of *The Lutheran*. His answer was, "Yes, but Lutherans don't believe they are the only ones who have it. There are true Christian believers in a vast majority of the churches, perhaps in all."¹¹ God's Word does not authorize Lutheran as a name for God's people. Even Luther himself condemned this practice.¹²

E. Doctrine

- 1. The doctrine of the church of Christ is divinely given and no other saves souls: 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 15:9; 1 Cor. 2:2, 15:1-4; Acts 2:42, and Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Tim. 4:1.
- 2. The identity theft of the church's doctrine.
 - a. Bishop of San Diego wrote on August 10, 2004 "The true "rule of faith"—as expressed in the Bible itself—is Scripture plus apostolic tradition, as manifested in the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church, to which were entrusted the oral teachings of Jesus and the apostles, along with the authority to interpret Scripture correctly."¹³ No man made

¹⁰ Catholic Answers, "Scripture and Tradition" (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 2001),

(http://www.catholic.com/library/Scripture_and_Tradition.asp, Retrieved: 6/18/06)

¹¹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, (<http://www.elca.org/communication/brief.html#becomechristian> Retrieved: 6/18/06)

¹² The Sermons of Martin Luther, *published by Baker Book House (Grand Rapids, MI). It was originally published in 1906* "In the same way the false Christians among the true Christians are of no use but to feed the world and be food for Satan, and they are so beautifully green and hypocritical, as if they alone were the saints, and hold the place in Christendom as if they were lords there, and the government and highest places belonged to them; and for no other reason than that they glory that they are Christians and are among Christians in the **church of Christ**, (emp. Mine) although they see and confess that they live unchristian lives"

¹³ Robert H. Brom, Catholic Answers, "What "Catholic" Means" (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 2001), (http://www.catholic.com/library/What_Catholic_Means.asp, Retrieved: 6/18/06)

doctrine in the form of tradition can save souls: 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Acts 5:28-29; Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:21-22.

- b. There is a religious book that has been quite popular for the past couple of years, *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. While the premise and purpose of the book is a good one, much religious error is propagated throughout its pages. It is not a book that should be read or studied by those who do not have a good grounding in the Scriptures, as they may be easily misled. Take, for instance, what Mr. Warren says on page 34, concerning the final judgment: “God won’t ask you about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust him?”¹⁴ This book is stealing the identity of the doctrine of Christ by lowering it to a position of unimportance, but Jesus Christ gives it great importance. “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

F. Membership

1. Terms of membership are distinctive: Acts 2:37,47; 9:6, 16:30.
 - a. Hearing the Word of God: Rom. 10:17; Acts 2:22; Acts 10:22, 13:7,44; Acts 15:7; Rom. 10:14
 - b. Believing the Word of God: John 8:24; Heb. 11:1,6; Acts 16:31; Matt. 16:16.
 - c. Repent: 2 Cor 7:10; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; Matt. 21:28-31; Acts 11:18.
 - d. Confessing Jesus Christ to be the Son of God: Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 16:16; 1 Tim. 6:13; Matt. 10:32.
 - e. Being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins: Mark 16:15-16; Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4; Rev. 1:5; 1 Pet. 3:21.
2. The identity theft of the church’s membership.
 - a. James 2:24, Membership given by Jesus Christ is vastly different than “Faith Only.”
 - b. “Sinners Prayer - My Lord and my God, have mercy upon my soul, a sinner. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross and shed His blood for the forgiveness of my sins. I believe Jesus rose again from the dead by the power of the Holy Ghost and sits on the right hand of God. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and wash all my sins away with Your blood. I invite you into my heart as my personal Savior, and will follow you the rest of my life. Your Word says you'll turn no one away, and that includes me. Therefore, I know you've heard me, and I know you've answered me, and I

¹⁴ Jason T. Carter, Park City, KY. DOES DOCTRINE MATTER?
<http://www.hattoncoc.org/bulletin597.html> Retrieved: 6/20/06)

know I'm saved. Thank you, Jesus, for saving my soul. Now raise your hands and thank and praise the Lord for saving your soul, open your heart and receive the life-giving Spirit of God.”¹⁵ This prayer will not save a soul. It is not found in the scriptures. It completely alters the identity of what does save.

- c. One is not voted into the church. Acts 2:47 teaches we are added by the Lord to His church.
- d. Baptism is essential to salvation. All who teach otherwise have stolen the blood of Christ our salvation.
- e. The New Testament clearly defines baptism as a burial (immersion). Pouring, sprinkling, and in your heart only are imposters to baptism that saves.
- f. Garland Elkins wrote: Baptism stands between the sinner and the salvation of his soul (Mark 16:16). Baptism stands between the sinner and remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism stands between the sinner and becoming a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27). Baptism stands between the sinner and having his sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Baptism stands between the sinner and getting into Christ (Rom. 6:3).¹⁶

G. Worship

1. Worship involves submission to the will of Christ and proper attitude, John 4:23-24. Spirit is the power with which a person thinks, feels, and decides. The truth is according to the Word of God. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).
 - a. Partaking of the Lord’s Supper on every first day of the week. The first day of the week is Sunday: Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19. The New Testament church was to assemble to partake of the Lord’s Supper: Heb. 10:25.
 - b. Singing: Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12.
 - c. Giving: 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7; 8:8.
 - d. Praying: Acts 2:42; Col. 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:17;
 - e. Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ: Acts 2:42; 20:7.
2. The identity theft of the church’s worship.
 - a. When a thief takes something of ours we feel violated and every Sunday when the Lord’s Supper is taken it is to be taken as Christ has identified it, and when it is violated God has the same feelings. We are to think of the suffering of Jesus Christ and the shedding of His blood. The Lord’s Supper is the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread taken on the first day of the week. All other violations are actions of

¹⁵ Dalen Garris, (Horizon Ministries, Waxahachie, TX) http://www.revivalfire.org/sinners_prayer_explained.htm, Retrieved: 6/20/06

¹⁶ Garland Elkins, The Lord’s Church Is Different, (Memphis TN., Garland Elkins Printing, 1973), 15.

identity theft: (1) Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, quarterly, monthly, yearly observance. (2) Taking it with any other ingredient (3) Taking it at a funeral or wedding, while singing or preaching, and without our thoughts centered on Jesus Christ is changing the identity of what pleases God.

- b. The simple beautiful congregational singing is what God commands. Therefore, Instrumental music, praise teams, solos, quartets, choirs, women leading singing, and such, is theft of the plan God has identified for His worship.
- c. Many have stolen the giving that God wants with raffles, bingos, socials, fundraisers, and tithing. Tithing is an Old Testament command, which was done away (Heb. 7:12). The command to give is a laying by in store from the heart a free will offering in the assembly of the saints.
- d. To address prayer to Mary or some other saint is theft of the plan God has described as prayer. Some have made a mockery of prayer with humming, waving of hands, and women leading public prayer. Prayer is a wonderful blessing and great privilege in petitioning the Father in the name of Jesus Christ and must be done with reverence and respect (Godly fear) to be heard.
- e. Many pulpits across the land have been stolen by those buying into a fad of swapping pulpits with unfaithful men (denominations, Rubel Shelly, Jeff Walling, Jimmy Allen, John Mark Hicks, etc.). They have stolen the identity of Gospel Preaching. Only faithful men are to preach (2 Tim 2:2) and only preach the Word of God (John 12:48).

H. Organization

- 1. The head of the church is Jesus Christ. Each congregation is autonomous with elders, deacons, preachers and teachers. This organization is not man made but given by Jesus Christ, Heb. 12:2.
 - a. Elders are also referred to as bishops, presbyters, overseers, shepherds: Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; 1 Pet. 5:1-4.
 - b. Deacons: Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-12.
 - c. Members: 1 Cor. 12:20; 1:2. All members are priests and participate in the worship.
- 2. The identity theft of the church's organization. 1 Pet. 5:8
 - a. The church of the New Testament has an organization. It was not left to man. Some have destroyed the identity of the church with synods, conventions, districts, regions, creeds, traditions, councils, associations, and other man made inventions. There is only one church, also called the one

body of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18; Col. 3:15; 1 Cor. 12:13, John 17:20-21).

- b. Catholic Answers website in an article titled “Apostolic Succession” had this comment: “...first Christians had no doubts about how to determine which was the true Church and which doctrines the true teachings of Christ. The test was simple: Just trace the apostolic succession of the claimants. Apostolic succession is the line of bishops stretching back to the apostles. All over the world, *all Catholic bishops are part of a lineage that goes back to the time of the apostles*, something that is impossible in Protestant denominations (most of which do not even claim to have bishops).”¹⁷ The church follows the apostles’ doctrine (Matt. 28:18-20) not the succession of men.

I. Mission

1. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20). Teaching the gospel to a lost and dying world, preaching the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), add Christian graces, carry out acts of benevolence (1 Tim. 5:8-16; James 1:27; Acts 6:1-6), and remain faithful until death (Rev. 2:10), is the mission of the church of Christ.
2. The identity theft of the church’s mission.
 - a. Some make the mission to entertain, socialize as in a social club, and run a business (hospitals, international benevolence societies, etc.). All such is ignorant worship (Acts 17:23).
 - b. Some declare the mission to offer drama, designer coffee, and feel good philosophy, and casual attitude. God says to worship with reverence to Him (Matt. 21:37; Heb. 12:28), doing things decent and in order (1 Cor 14:40), and godly (2 Pet 1:3), or the worship become vain (Matt. 15:9).

J. Destination

1. The destination of the church of Christ is heaven. No other organization can claim to be that which saves. Christ is coming to reward His saints (2 Tim. 4:6-8; John 5:28-29; Matt. 16:27).
2. The identity theft of the church’s destination.
 - a. Some claim to lead to heaven. Very few claim to lead to nonexistence, but some do (Matt. 7:21-23).

¹⁷Catholic Answers, “Apostolic Succession” (San Diego: Catholic Answers, 2001), (http://www.catholic.com/library/Apostolic_Succession.asp, Retrieved: 6/18/06)

- b. The claim to go to heaven will not get one to heaven. God requires endurance (Rev. 2:10) and obedience (Rev. 22:14; John 5:29).

III. CONCLUSION

The Federal Trade Commissions' steps to minimize identity theft are to **Deter**, **Detect**, and **Defend**, which may help us to avoid church identity theft.

- A. ***“DETER identity thieves by safeguarding your information.”*** Safeguarding the truth is a Biblical principle. “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psa. 4:8). “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prov. 29:25). “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:24). “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates” (2 Cor. 13:5-6).
- B. ***“DETECT suspicious activity by routinely monitoring your financial accounts and billing statements.”*** Detect those who offer false doctrine and organizations different than the pattern approved by God. “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:5-5). “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).
- C. ***“DEFEND against ID theft as soon as you suspect a problem.”*** Defend the gospel of Jesus Christ with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength. “But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:15). “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28). “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).
- D. Satan from the beginning was a thief of truth and advocate of false identity of the New Testament church (1 Pet. 5:8; John 8:44). “The **thief cometh not**, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have

life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, **or as a thief**, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters” (1 Pet. 4:15). “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But **ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief**. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thess. 5:2-6). You can identify the New Testament Church by the distinctive plea and we have a responsibility to keep its identity pure (2 John 9-11).

Words of Encouragement: What Is Right with the Church Today?
Ephesians 5:27
Leonard White

I. Introduction.

1. We live in a day when it is easy for people to look at things and point out what is wrong. People often point out what is wrong with various things:
 - A. The government.
 - B. The home.
 - C. Teenagers
 - D. Society

2. Churches are no different. It is very easy to point out what is wrong with the church. It easy to concentrate on the problems. It is easy to tear it down. There are some who would like to destroy it.
3. We need to be reminded of What Is Right With The Church.

I. Definition of two words.

A. Define: Church

1. It is not:
 - a. The building.
 - b. Man made denominations.
 - c. What man decides it will be in his own mind.
2. It is:
 - a. The church Jesus said he would build. (Matthew 16:18.)
 - b. The church Jesus gave Himself for. (Ephesians 5:24.)
 - c. The church which is the body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22,23.)
 - d. The church those on Pentecost were added to. (Acts 2:47.)

B. Define: Right

1. It is not:
 - a. What seems right. (Proverbs 14:12.)
 - b. What feels right.
2. It is:
 - a. “being in accordance with what is just, good, or proper”. (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.)
 - b. The standard for right is what God’s Word says is “just, good, or proper”.

II. So, “What is right with the church?”

- A. God planned and designed the church that we read about in the Bible. (Ephesians 3:10,11.)

1. Old Testament prophesy. (Isaiah 2:2,3.)
 2. Built by Christ. (Matthew 16:18.)
 3. Christ is the head. (Colossians 1:18.)
 4. Christ (being the head) controls:
 - a. The terms of entrance.
 - b. The worship of the church.
 - c. The life of the church.
 5. How does he do this? Through His Word. (Colossians 3:16.)
- B. It is the moral beacon in this wicked world.
1. The church is the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14.)
 2. Hold forth the word of life. (Philippians 2:14-16.)
 3. It is right for the church to cry out against evil. (Ephesians 5:11.)
 - a. Immorality.
 - b. Gambling.
 - c. Abortion.
 - d. Drinking.
 - e. etc..
- C. It is the training ground for those who want to be examples to the world of what a true Christian is.
1. I Timothy 4:12.
 2. I Timothy 6:11-12.
 3. II Timothy 2:22.
- D. It is God's institution for helping those who are suffering.
1. Widows and fatherless. (James 1:27.)
 2. The sick.
 3. The poor.
 4. The broken hearted. (Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 61:1,2.)
 5. Sin destroys people's lives. (Matthew 9:12.)
- E. It is the only group that has been given the privilege of taking the message of salvation to the whole world.
1. Matthew 28:19,20.
 2. Romans 1:16,17.
 3. Acts 20:27.
 4. I Corinthians 9:16.
- F. It is the greatest group of people on earth. Why?
1. We are the family of God. (I Tim 3:15.)
 2. The church is the dwelling place of all the saved on earth. (Acts 2:47.)
 3. It's members are burden bearers. (Gal 6:1,2.)

Conclusion:

The church is the greatest body of people on the face of the earth.

When Jesus asked the twelve, “Will ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:67-69).

So I ask, If we destroy the Lord’s church were will we go?
Will we replace with a man made church? Can we create a better church than the one we read about in the Bible? The answer is no!

There is only one church that Jesus built.

So let us always remember what is right with the church and let us always strive to live our lives in such a way that we bring honor and glory to our Father in Heaven.

If you are not a Christian why not become one today?

Jesus said “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16). You can do that today and when you do the Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:47).

When Is An Example Binding?

Jay Yeager

My heart felt thanks to the congregations of Garden City, West and Saline for the invitation to speak on this excellent lectureship program. It is a personal joy for me to be in association with these sound congregations and the faithful men on this program. It is my hope and prayer that only good might come from the efforts of all involved, and that the word of God might have free course and be glorified (II Thessalonians 3:1).

When one studies examples in the Bible, there needs to be some distinctions:

1. Examples which teach a lesson but beg no following.
2. Examples worthy of emulation.
3. Examples that are exceptions to the rule; therefore, not binding.
4. Examples that authorize action without binding the example.
5. Examples that operate from custom; but bind the principle.
6. Examples that are approved and binding.

Examples which teach a lesson but beg no following

Achan, a man who lost his entire family because of covetousness. Beloved, every path we chose leads somewhere with spiritual life or death at the end (Jeremiah 21:8). Achan never looked beyond the moment, “I saw, I coveted them, I took them”--really never asked the question at what price? (Joshua 7:21-26). Had it been possible for Achan to get away with stealing from God (Joshua 6:19), it would not have satisfied him for long, for **“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity”** (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

Jeroboam, a man who wanted to be king over Israel. Once that goal was achieved he was willing to do anything to keep it, even if it meant denying the true and living God (I Kings 12: 25-28). When Jeroboam determined to set up idols in Dan and Bethel in order to control the hearts of the people, there were those who knew better, but they allowed fear to silence them (I Kings 13:11 see Obadiah 11). The end result was that Jeroboam sinned and caused Israel to sin (I Kings 14:16). The old adage which says “Absolute power corrupt absolutely” would certainly apply to Jeroboam.

Judas, a thief that practiced deceit even in the physical presence of Deity (John 12:5-6). How far would such a person go? Friends, the slide of the ungodly has no stopping place. Judas was willing to sell-out the Son of God for the mere price of a slave (Matthew 26:14-15; Exodus 21:32). Judas would lead a mob to Jesus and turn a sign of affection into a kiss of betrayal (Matthew 26:47-49). Apparently, that action, and the events which would follow, brought about enough remorse that a thief and a traitor would return the wages of betrayal (Matthew 27:3-5), but not enough to bring genuine repentance (Matthew 27:5).

Suicide is an example none should follow!

Ananias and Sapphira, pretended to be something they were not. There is little doubt that they wanted the appreciation shown to Barnabas, who had sold land and brought the entire amount and laid it at the apostles feet (Acts 4:36-37). Ananias and Sapphira wanted the same praise, but were unwilling to make the same sacrifice. Friends, maybe they could not afford to give all the money gained from the sale, and they were not required to (Acts 5:4).

Beloved, do you know we are forbidden to measure ourselves by others (II Corinthians 10:12)? Ananias and Sapphira wanted to be more than they were, and were willing to lie to make people believe it. The offer was extended to allow them to make amends, but the lie they told would become their epitaph. It might read something like this; “Here lies a husband and wife (liars) who died hours apart because the praise of men was more important to them than the praise of God” (Acts 5:1-10).

Examples worthy of emulation

Noah, in a dark and dismal time in human history (Genesis 6:5-6), was a marvelous beacon of light (Genesis 6:8). Not only did Noah find grace in the sight of the Lord, he was more than that, on the pages of inspiration there are a few given special recognition. Noah is among that number. Noah along with Job and Daniel are mentioned in a single verse as men of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14). What a compliment given them by God! Note: six verses later there is a truth reinforced through-out the Bible; namely, righteousness is not transferable (Ezekiel 14:20). The next time you are studying the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), remember these verses.

Abraham, a man told to leave his family and all that was familiar, to go on a journey (pilgrimage – Hebrews 11:13) without knowing the destination (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham may not have known where he was going, but he know that God would be there regardless of where it was (Jeremiah 23:23-24).

Not many of us will live to be one hundred. Of that few, none will be thinking of becoming a parent, yet Abraham did not stagger at the promise that he would have a son to his wife Sarah, who herself was ninety. Why did Abraham not stagger at the promise? He believed (had faith) that God was able to perform whatever He promised (Romans 4:20-21). No wonder Abraham is called the father of all them that believe (Romans 4:11). God bestowed upon Abraham a tremendous compliment--He called Abraham His friend (James 2:23; II Chronicles 20:7).

Daniel, refused to follow the permissive words; “When in Rome do as the Romans do”, as though circumstances are the defining factor in morality. Daniel refused to defile himself by eating the king’s meat. One would expect that his refusal was based upon one of two possible reasons:

1. The meat was unclean (Leviticus 11:1-47; Acts 10:10-16).
2. The meat was a part of idolatrous worship (Deuteronomy 32:38; I Corinthians 8:7).

Or drinking the king's wine, in a time when so many justify social drinking, the Bible still calls it unwise (Proverbs 20:1). The six burning questions of Proverbs 23:29 provide ample warning to honest souls:

1. "Who hath woe?"
2. "Who hath sorrow?"
3. "Who hath contentions?"
4. "Who hath babblings?"
5. "Who hath wounds without a cause?"
6. "Who hath redness of eyes?"

In all the years that Daniel served as a prophet in the king's court, the only things the enemies of Daniel could exploit was in his devotion to God (Daniel 6:4-5). Truly, Daniel was a man of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14).

Stephen, enters the history book of the New Testament in Acts 6:5ff as the central figure in Acts chapter seven, and he remains in the hearts and minds of Christians down through the ages as one who stood for truth even in the face of death! In Acts 7, Stephen rehearses the Jewish history beginning with Abraham, but quickly focuses upon the false accusations made against him; namely, that he spoke against the law of Moses and against the temple (Acts 6:11-13). Perhaps for the first time the Jews were learning the Law was given by the disposition of angels (Acts 7:38; 53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:1-2).

Further, the temple was far less significant than they imagined (Acts 7:48-50). From that point forward, the audience stopped listening. Then Stephen speaks of their guilt (Acts 7:51-52), and the rage of Jews, who were present, is poured out upon an innocent man (Acts 7:54-58). Yet, Stephen following the example of his Lord and prays for his enemies (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60). Having already seen the Lord standing at the right hand of God, Stephen surrenders his physical life and passes into eternity, an example for all who come after "It pays to follow Jesus no matter the cost".

Examples that are exceptions to the rule; therefore, not binding

Prayer is a restricted privilege:

1. Not for a person who is self-centered (Proverbs 1:23-29).
2. Not for the person who is selfish (James 4:1-2).
3. Not for the person who is self-righteous (Luke 18:10-14).
4. Not for the person who is a sinner (Isaiah 59:1-2; John 9:31; I Peter 3:12)

Prayer is for a person who is a Christian (Ephesians 1:3), one who has the right to call God Father (Matthew 6:9; Ephesians 5:20).

"Well," says one, "What about Cornelius?" Folks, whether the prayer of Cornelius came up before God as a memorial, or the prayer of Cornelius was heard (Acts 10:4; 31), the fact remains that if God heard the prayer of Cornelius; then he is the exception to the rule. Exceptions never set aside the rule, which is why we call them exceptions!

Death is a visitor that comes to call upon everyone (Ecclesiastes 3:2), and when that day comes none of us can prevent it (Ecclesiastes 8:8). Only the second coming of Christ will stop the natural order of time (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). “Well”, says another, “I do not want to die; I want to go straight into heaven”. We would answer (and correctly), “You cannot go to heaven that way”. Perhaps we might hear, “Elijah did not die, he went straight into heaven in a Chariot” (II Kings 2:11). True, both Elijah and Enoch (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5) were the exceptions to the rule, but exceptions never set aside the rule!

Christians are to pray unto God the Father (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2; Colossians 1:12), in the name of Christ (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17; I Timothy 2:5; I John 2:1-2). But what about Stephen? Did he pray to Jesus? Beloved, if Stephen prayed to Jesus in Acts 7:59-60, then that is the exception. We are instructed to pray to God, the Father, in the name of Christ -- that is the rule, and exceptions never set aside the rule!

Examples that authorize action without binding the example

Paul taught house to house (Acts 20:20); therefore, we are authorized to teach house to house. However, we may opt to use other methods of teaching: Television, radio, newspaper, gospel meetings, lectureships, web sites and tracts – whatever may be the most effective means to spread the gospel. We are bound to spread the gospel to a lost and dying world (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16), we are authorized to do so house to house.

The churches of Macedonia gave beyond their means to provide aid to the poor saints in Jerusalem (II Corinthians 8:1-3; Romans 15:26); therefore, we are authorized to give beyond our means. As Christians we are bound to give bountifully and cheerfully on the first day of every week according as we have prospered (II Corinthians 9:6-9; I Corinthians 16:1-2). We are authorized to give beyond our means, but only required to give as we have prospered.

Barnabas sold land and brought the entire amount and laid it at the apostles feet (Acts 4:36-37); therefore, we are authorized to give the entire profit from land or property sold, but we are not bound to do so. Such was the very thing Peter told Ananias; **“Whiles it remained, was it not in thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine power?”** (Acts 5:4). Can I sell property or land and give the entire amount to the church? Yes, I am authorized to do so. I am I bound by that example? No!

I am authorized to name names. Paul publicly exposed the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus as they were saying that the resurrection is already past (II Timothy 2:17-18). Hymenaeus and Alexander were personally named for blasphemy (I Timothy 1:19-20), yet, the name of the man that had an affair with his father’s wife is not given (I Corinthians 5:1-13).

There were certain men from Judaea which “**taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved**” (Acts 15:1). Now, from that may I assume that either:

1. There were too many to name individually?
2. There was hope that the meeting at Jerusalem would have a positive effect, and they would see the error of their way?
3. That it was more important to stem what was being taught, rather than who taught it?

Am I authorized to name names? Yes! Am I bound to name names? That may depend upon circumstances. Now, having said that, you cannot mark those who remain anonymous (Romans 16:17-18).

Examples which operate from custom; but bind the principle

The events in the upper room are the longest recorded discourse we have of Jesus with just His apostles (John 13:1-17:26). The Passover had been observed, the Lord’s Supper instituted, and then Jesus does a surprising thing; He girds himself with a towel and begins to wash the feet of the disciples. Now, from that, I would like to raise three questions:

1. What was the custom?
2. Why did Jesus feel it necessary to wash the feet of the disciples?
3. What was he trying to teach?

What was the custom? In the Jewish homes of that day there was a basin and a pitcher of water just inside the door. Whenever anyone would come by, the owner would have the guest place their feet over the basin and water would be poured to cleanse their dusty feet. Such was a common courtesy of that time.

Why did Jesus feel it necessary to wash the feet of the disciples? This was a borrowed room. There was no host to perform this courtesy and none of the disciples volunteered for the task, so Jesus did what none of them offered to do for each other.

What was Jesus trying to teach? Was He binding foot washing as a ritual? If so, how often is the duty to be performed? Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Quarterly? Yearly? Who decides? Beloved, the custom of foot washing was never done religiously. It was an act of courtesy, and Jesus used the custom to teach the principle of being a servant. We are servants to God (Romans 6:22; I Thessalonians 1:9), servants to Christ (Matthew 24:50; 25:14) and servants to one another (Galatians 5:13). The day we think we are too big to do the least task in the church, we’d better go read John 13 again.

First Corinthians chapter eleven has long been misunderstood, as some mistakenly come to the conclusion that a hat of some type will serve as a head covering. The dilemma arises from the fact the words cover or covered, do not accurately reveal the meaning intended. The words should be translated as veil or veiled -- once in verse five, twice in verse six, once in verse seven and once in verse thirteen. A hat does not meet the

requirements of a veil. The custom of the first century, and still in some parts of the world, is that a woman should be veiled as a sign of submission.

Paul is using the custom of the first century to teach that there is a Divine order: God, Christ, man and woman (I Corinthians 11:3). The principle taught in First Corinthians 11 does not depend upon the custom to establish it, for it is as old as the creation of man (I Corinthians 11:8-9; I Timothy 2:11-13). Paul uses the custom to teach the principle, and the principle is binding.

Examples that are approved and binding

When is an example binding? When the example either establishes or illustrates Divine truth!

Worship

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ himself (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20). I Corinthians 11:23-29 supplies the purpose to show forth the Lord's death until he comes. Additionally, the attitude is given in these verses. In essence, stay focused on the sacrifice offered for our benefit – partake of the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner.

But the frequency is only found in Acts 20:7, **by apostolic example we learn that the Lord's Supper is to be observed on the first day of every the week – and that example is authoritative and binding.** Considering the significance of the first day of the week (the Lord's Day--Revelation 1:10), students of the scriptures will find no surprise here.

1. The Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mark 16:1-2).
2. The church was established on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:15-16; Acts 2:1).
3. The church gave on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-2).
4. The first day of the week is the day of Christian worship, and worship would not be complete without observing the Lord's Supper.

Salvation

Philip goes to the city of Samaria and preaches the gospel of Christ. Few have experienced the success Philip enjoyed. Even Simon the sorcerer, who bewitched the city for a long time, came to believe what Philip preached. Now, it is what Philip preached that requires our attention. **“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and woman”** (Acts 8:12).

Beloved, preaching the kingdom (church) is binding by this approved example. It would be unthinkable to preach Christ and not preach the church. That would be preaching Christ and not preaching what He shed His blood for (Acts 20:28). That would be preaching Christ and not preaching what He is the head of (Ephesians 1:22-23). That would be preaching Christ and not preaching where reconciliation unto God is (Ephesians

2:12-16). That would be preaching Christ and not preaching what Jesus loves (Ephesians 5:25). That would be preaching Christ and not preaching what he is going to save (Ephesians 5:23). Could one preach Christ and not preach the church? Not hardly!

Law

In Romans 13:1-7 we learn three things:

1. Civil government is a part of the gospel of Christ and is ordained by God (Romans 13:1).
2. That government as God intends functions to protect the innocent and punish the evil-doers (Romans 13:4).
3. We are to be subject to civil law (Romans 13:2).

However, there is this to consider. In Acts chapter five the apostles are brought before the Jewish civil authority and they were instructed to speak no more in the name of Christ (Acts 4:18; 5:28). **“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). From that apostolic example, there is a Divine truth given; namely, if civil government demands that which would put a Christian in conflict with the Law of Christ, then the Law of Christ would supersede the civil authority.

There may come in our lifetime demands from civil government that would place a Christian in conflict with the Law of Christ:

1. Deny the right of Christians to speak out against the sin of homosexuality
2. The demand to allow women leadership roles within the church: i.e. Elders, deacons and preachers.
3. The demand to recognize same-sex marriage.
4. Restrict the rights of Christians to preach the gospel to all the world.

When and if that day comes, this apostolic example would require all Christians to answer; **“We ought to obey God, rather than men!**

The Same Seed Produces the Same Results, And A Different Seed Produces Different Results

Perry B. Cotham

As we close this year's fine lectureship our study at this hour will be based upon Christ's parable of the Sower, or the Soils. Herein He teaches the absolute necessity of the Word of God for conversion (cf. Matt. 13:3-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15 KJV). Neither in the natural nor in the spiritual realm can there be life without seed.

Seed is essential for making Christians, or congregations of God's people, in all parts of the world. The Word of God is the spiritual seed of the kingdom. Christ, in explaining the parable said, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). He also mentioned four different kinds of soil.

Every farmer knows that the seed must be planted for a harvest. The germ of life is in the seed, and every seed produces after its kind (Gen. 1:11-12). God made it that way in the beginning. The Word of God is to the spiritual kingdom what the grain of wheat is to the natural kingdom. If no seed is planted, there is no harvest; if no gospel is taught—or preached—there are no Christians. The human heart is the soil and the seed enters it when he hears God's Word.

Satan's Work

Satan tries to keep one from hearing the Word, or if he hears, to later remove the Word from his mind. He knows its power. The seed will bring forth new life. The gospel is God's power "unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7). The apostle Peter states that all the saved are begotten—or born again—by this seed, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23). So, the Word of God, the seed, is the means by which a new life is created within the heart and one is converted.

Also, the Word possesses a vitality that can never decay or be destroyed. Unlike the seed of the physical world, which are corruptible, God's Word lives and abides forever; man cannot destroy the Bible from the face of this earth. This has been tried, down through the ages, since the church of our Lord was established, but all efforts have failed. Then Peter also adds, "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (vs 25).

Hence, the word, recorded in the Bible, is life-begetting and indestructible. "For the word of God is quick and powerful" (Heb. 4:12), or "living and powerful" (NKJV), or "living, and active" (ASV). Therefore, Satan is successful only when he succeeds in keeping men from hearing, or hearing and believing and obeying the Word of God.

All churches must realize that we must keep on sowing the seed to have a crop; without this seed there can be no conversions. Christians cannot be made without it.

Satan knows how people are converted; so, whenever possible, he steals “the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). In view of these facts the Great Commission given by Christ assumes vast importance, “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).

What is it that one believes? It is the gospel. What is it that will damn him if he does not believe? It is his disobedience to the gospel.

Same Seed, Same Harvest

As already mentioned, every seed reproduces after its kind. Therefore, if we want to have the one, true divine church of our Lord Jesus Christ in any city, state, or nation today, we must plant the same seed that was planted by inspired men of the first century. A different doctrine, or doctrines, will produce different religious bodies. Truly, the same seed will produce the same results, but a different seed will produce different results. Faithful gospel preachers have always emphasized this simple teaching regarding the restoration of New Testament Christianity down through the ages that this is how we can have the same, true church today in any part of the world, by sowing the seed of the kingdom. For example, N.B. Hardeman, President of Freed-Hardeman College (then called), in one of his great meetings in April 1923 held in Nashville TN, talked about this very point in one of his sermons. After speaking of the Lord’s church being built in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2, he asked:

How can you and I know something definite, ...regarding the church founded by the Christ? Its history cannot be traced to Pentecost. ...What is our hope? Let me answer that their is but one hope, and that is as to whether or not we have in our midst that which, when planted in the hearts of men, will produce a crop, not somewhat like, not resembling, but identical with, the crop produced in apostolic days. ...Our Lord once said that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom. The apostles were bidden to go into all the world and preach the gospel—sow the seed. ...What was the product from this sowing? Men and women became Christians. Churches were built up and set in order...the apostles sowed the seed...the people heard it, believed it, and obeyed it, and the Lord added them to the church. ...Friends, just as certain as it is that we have the same seed used by the apostles, we can have the same product and the same church (pp196, ‘7, Vol.2, Tabernacle Sermons).

This illustration is so plain and simple for all to understand.

A farmer cannot sow wheat seed and reap a corn crop. Neither can a preacher sow false doctrine and reap a faithful, true New Testament church. Too, no seed sown, no crop reaped. Churches should get busy sowing the seed. What made Christians in the days of the apostles will make Christians now; and what made a church of Christ then will make a church of Christ now. The need of the present day is plain, simple gospel preaching. The church that possesses all the earmarks of a true New Testament church is

a church that has been produced by the seed of the kingdom, the Word of God, the apostolic message.

Soon after the church was established the gospel had been preached throughout the world. Paul stated this, he said the gospel had been “preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:23). This was accomplished by the apostles and their co-workers going and sowing the seed of the kingdom, and this is still the primary task of the church. No other so-called “religion” on the face of the earth has such a message as the glorious gospel of Christ. Some say, “One church is as good as another”. But there is not one single passage of scripture that will justify this statement. Too, the Lord’s church is not a denomination.

No Direct Revelations

Some claim that God speaks directly to men through divine revelations of the Holy Spirit. Joseph Smith claimed to have a special revelation from God, on the basis of which he established Mormonism. William Miller and Mrs. Ellen G. White claimed to be the recipients also of special divine revelations, as a result of which they set up Seventh-Day Adventism. Mrs. Mary Barker Eddy claimed to have a special revelation from God and founded the Christian Science movement. Every religious delusion the world has known has been founded upon a “so-called” revelation, in addition to God’s Word, from the Lord. Is it possible for the same God to deliver so many conflicting revelations? Does wheat seed at times produce wheat, and at other times produce oats, corn, or cotton, ect.? This is impossible. The same seed produces the same crop in every place, every year. There is no evidence in Scripture that God today speaks to men directly, in addition to His revealed Word in the Bible. When the apostle John finished the Book of Revelation the doctrine of Christ came to a close; all truth had been given. We must, therefore, reject all alleged “special revelations of the spirit” as source of religious error and no part of the “seed of the kingdom”.

Too, if a direct operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary for conversion—or making a Christian—as some think, without sowing the seed, then God is showing partiality when He does not convert all. However, the Bible says that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). If this theory be true, it makes God wholly responsible when the sinner is condemned at the final judgment. But there is no deficiency in the Bible, it is the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105).

Conclusion

As already mentioned, Peter wrote that the Word of God is eternal, it lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23). However, some have over the years, tried to destroy this seed of the kingdom. But they have failed. Voltaire, the French infidel, in 1776, predicted that in one hundred years the Bible would be lost. But about twenty-five years after his death the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed, and this one society alone has given the world millions of copies of the Bible in several different languages.

Thomas Jefferson, in his book on Western Virginia, predicted that fifty years from then there would not be a Bible in America unless it is found in some curiosity shop. Thomas Paine, in his book, *The Key of Reason*, predicted the end of the Bible. These men have gone the way of all men of the flesh, but the Word of God, “the seed of the kingdom” still exists. The American Bible Society in New York City, N.J., has been printing and distributing millions of copies of the Bible all over America. Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899) criticized the Bible. He would give lectures on “The Mistakes of Moses”. We would like to hear Moses give a lecture on “The mistakes of Ingersoll”.

The Word of God is going to live. It will judge us in the last day. Jesus said, “...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:38). For the restoration of New Testament Christianity we must sow the seed of the kingdom. If we sow the seed of denominational errors, it will produce denominationalism. And if we do not sow the seed of truth the devil will sow the seed of religious errors. Let us study the Bible and preach the Word, and sow the seed. God will bless us!

*How precious is the book divine,
By inspiration given!
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,
To guide our souls to heaven.*

*Blessed Bible, how I love it!
How it doth my bosom cheer!
What has earth like this to covet?
Oh, what stores of wealth are here!*

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