

BABIES ARE NOT BORN IN SIN!

By Lynn Blair

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The idea of babies being born in sin is foreign to the Bible. Babies do not inherit sin from their parents.

"The soul that sinneth, It shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20).

Children are born in a perfect state. "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezek. 28:15). Jesus said that unless we humble ourselves and become as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:1-4).

Among the denominations that teach this false doctrine the misuse of Psalm 51:5 is predominant. That verse says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me." Some modern versions mistranslate the phrase "I was born a sinner."

There is a vast difference in the meaning of the translations. In the King James and American Standard the mother did the sinning, but, in the New International for instance, it was the baby that was the sinner! The older versions are correct.

We know this in two ways. First, the original language states it emphatically, as do the King James and American Standard. Second, since the Bible does not contradict itself, and verses such as Ezekiel 18:20; 28:15; and Matthew 18:1-4 teach that babies are not born sinners, the statement that a baby was born in sin cannot be true.

One might ask, if that is not the meaning of Psalm 51:5, then what can it mean? First, it is a Repentance Psalm. David committed adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11:1-27). He said, "my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). Because of his terrible guilt, he felt he had been sinning so long he couldn't remember when he started.

There is another scriptural explanation for this. Deuteronomy 23:3 says, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord." In Ruth 1:4 we find two Israelite men marrying Moabite women, one of which was Ruth. Ruth was the great-grandmother of the author of Psalm 51—David!. He was within "ten generations" of a Moabite! That may be why he said, "in sin did my mother conceive me."

There has never been a baby that believed (Mark 16:16). There has never been a baby that repented (Acts 2:38). There has never been a baby who had his sins washed away (Acts 22:16), because there has never been a baby that sinned!

NOTES ON AUTHORITY

By Dub McClish

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A necessary question is, What is Scriptural authority? Sometimes people who ask this mean, where is this or that specifically mentioned in the Bible as approved of God?

The truth is some things are authorized by the New Testament that are not specifically named. This brings up the subject of the two kinds of authorization found in the New Testament.

First: specific authorization is a given practice named with God's approval. Many examples can be cited, such as going into all the world with the gospel (Mark 16:16), assembling each first day of the week to partake of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), and baptizing people in the name of Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Second: authorization permitting the use of arrangements not specifically mentioned in the Bible. For example automobiles are not mentioned in Mark 16:16, but are authorized in obeying the command to go into all the world with the Gospel? A plate is not mentioned for serving the bread of the Lord's supper, but is it allowable?

For a thing to be generally authorized there must be behind it the implementing of some specific command. A thing resting upon generic authority must not conflict with any other precept of Scripture. Using a car to preach the Gospel is scriptural, but one may not steal a car in order to preach the gospel.

Building a church building rests upon generic authority and not specific authority. The command to assemble (Heb. 10:25) implies a place to assemble, whether borrowed, rented, or purchased.

Many things about a church building fall in the realm of generic authority. Restrooms, water fountains, carpet on the floor, padding on the pews, ceiling fans and other things fall into this category.

The use to which property of a local church can be put is in this realm. Who is to decide such matters? The obvious answer is the elders. Elders have oversight of every optional part of the work and activity of the local congregation (Heb. 13:17).

Elder's authority does not extend to releasing what Christ has bound or binding what He has released (Matt. 16:19-20). The Lord has made all the spiritual law men need (2 Tim. 2:15),

and He has left it with us in His “perfect law of liberty” to implement his teaching.

Elders, like every child of God, must protect against false teachers, and keep the church faithful to the law of Christ (Acts 20:28-30). Elders have oversight of the policy and programs of the local church. They determine what will be done in matters of generic authority.

Electricity and plumbing in the building; eating a meal on the church premises; whether one or more gospel meetings per year; whether to have a lectureship every year and what subjects to study, and the speakers; whether to publish a book and audio and video tapes with which to preserve the messages for further reflection and wider distribution all fall into this category—all are matters of general authority, but authority nonetheless.

The specific authority for a lectureship, publication of a book, and tape recordings of the messages are found in the command to preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:16). If such lectureships have solid authority, and if the reproduction of the messages by print and tape rests upon solid authority, then it must follow that distribution of said materials also rests upon solid authority.

If it is right to produce such materials for the Gospel on church property, is it right to sell such, for a fair price, on the same property?

The same general authority authorizing a church building, water, electricity, and gas, authorize the making and distribution of sound Gospel materials for the information of saints. Is the church supporting private business when the plumbing fails, and the plumber makes repairs for which the church pays? A plumber is not expected to clean out the sewer lines for nothing!

Some think a thing is all right as long as it is small, but

when it is big it is wrong. Question: how big is big, and by whose judgment? Such a person is a law maker for God!

Another point relating to littleness/bigness. Neither size nor quantity has anything to do with the rightness or wrongness of a matter of judgment. If it is not wrong for an eldership to decide to install a refrigerated drinking fountain in the church building, then it is not wrong to install a refrigerator in a church building. The size of the thing has nothing to do with it! If it is wrong for people to eat bread and fish in the church building, then it is wrong for the church to install a drinking fountain. Conversely, if it is right to install a drinking fountain, it is right to eat bread and fish (or even chicken) in the church building.

Inexcusable Excuses

By Terry R. Townsend
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Have you ever thought about what folks might say to God at judgment for their failure to obey him? It's sobering, isn't it, to know there's a coming judgment – a day in which all men will give account of themselves to the Lord! Paul writes, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Let's consider a few inexcusable excuses.

Without question, millions of people will blame their lack of obedience on preachers. Unfortunately, millions today put more faith in mortal man than they do God. Yet, the Bible is abundantly clear that one must be a doer of the word and not a hearer only (James 1:21-25). False teachers are deceiving

millions into thinking they have “peace and safety,” when in reality they’re on a collision course with destruction (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). Thus, it behooves us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). Blaming false teachers at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

There will be many on the Day of Judgment blaming the weather for their lack of involvement in the Lord’s work. When asked why they fail to participate in spiritual activities, many blame mother nature – too hot in summer, too cold in winter, too wet in spring, too windy in fall, etc. If truth be told, people will do whatever their hearts so desire! Inclement weather does not negate one’s responsibility to serve God (1 Cor. 15:58). Blaming the weather at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

Undoubtedly, millions will blame their parents at Judgment for their failure to do God’s will. How often have I heard non-members say the following in a Bible study, “I see what you’re saying, but if what I believe was good enough for dad and mom, it’s good enough for me!” But what if dad and mom were wrong? Will God still grant you entrance into Heaven despite your failure to obey that which you knew to be true? The Bible says that one must obey Christ above all else, including family (cf. Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-35). In matters of faith, who should we ultimately listen to? Parents or Christ? Obviously, the answer is Jesus (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-3). Putting the blame on parents for your lack of obedience will be an inexcusable excuse.

Others at Judgment will use the excuse of profession for their failing to do the Father’s Will. I’m sure some will say, “I would have obeyed and served you Lord, but my job wouldn’t allow it.” Truth be told, millions are more interested in money than they are in God. Paul had it right when he penned, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a

root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Tim. 6:9-10 ESV). Jesus said that we're to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). To blame one's profession at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

I'm sure that on Judgment Day some will use their lack of earthly substance (poverty) as an excuse for their failing to do the will of God. Some will probably say, "Lord, I wasn't as blessed as others; thus, I didn't do all I could." I wonder if God will have standing beside Him the widow who gave two mites as an example to those making such excuses (cf. Mark 12:41-44)? The Lord expects us to do what we can with what we have (Matt. 25:14 ff). Blaming our lack of service on poverty will be an inexcusable excuse.

Another excuse many will make at Judgment will be that of persecution. I can hear some now, "Lord, I would've served You, but I didn't because I feared persecution." But didn't he tell us in his word that Christians would be mistreated on occasion (cf John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12). Didn't he assure us his presence, protection, and panoply to help us overcome (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6; Eph. 6:10 ff)? Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Thus, fear of persecution as a defense for failing to obey God will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Finally, millions will offer unto God the excuse of procrastination; that is, many will say, "I wanted to obey You Lord, but I simply ran out of time!" I wonder if Felix will be among the masses who will make such an excuse (Acts 24:25)? The Lord is patient, and he gives men ample time to obey (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9-14); thus, to use procrastination as a reason for failing to obey will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Simply put, we can make all the excuses we want to as to why we fail to do God's Will; however, on the Day of Judgment, God's answer to such excuses will be this:

"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!"

How Are Men Saved?

By Louis Rushmore

Out of boundless love, God the Father sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us was part of God's grace and mercy by which we are saved. The sacrifice of Christ and grace permits a just God to grant forgiveness of sins; Christ's sacrifice and mercy permits a just God to withhold punishment for sins. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

Through grace God gives men what they do not deserve (salvation), and through mercy God does not give men what they do deserve (punishment). However, the grace and mercy of God which results in salvation is conditional upon man's obedience

to the Gospel.

With no less love for our souls, Jesus Christ willingly died for us. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Through his shed blood Christ saves us. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

Also, as mediator between God the Father and ourselves Jesus saves us. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:4-5). However, Christ as mediator and his blood save men conditionally.

The Holy Spirit's role in conversion relates primarily to the provision of inspired revelation (the Word of God). Second Peter 1:20-21 summarizes the way in which Scripture was communicated from God to man. "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 Peter 1:20-21).

The Holy Spirit, along with God and Jesus Christ, participates with men in their conversion. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). That joint participation of the Godhead with us in the forgiveness of sins is non-miraculous and through the Word of God.

All that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have done to

arrange for the forgiveness of sins is conditional upon man's obedience to God's plan of salvation recorded in the Gospel (the New Testament portion of the Bible). First, one must examine what the Bible teaches about salvation in order for faith to develop. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Without faith salvation is impossible. "But 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); "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" (John 8:24).

However, faith only is useless. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20). "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Though men cannot earn salvation, God refuses to grant forgiveness of sins to men who refuse to obey him.

Faith is followed by repentance. All men are required to repent or perish. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Profession before others of one's faith in Jesus Christ naturally occurs next. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). One New Testament character worded his profession: ". . . I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:38).

Baptism (immersion) is the point at which sins are forgiven. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). "And now why tarriest thou?

arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Baptism, though, does not save without the Godhead's role in salvation as well as man's part in his own salvation (i.e., hearing, believing, repenting, professing).

God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have done their parts toward saving men. However, man also has a role in his own salvation according to Philippians 2:12. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

Man's role is summarized in the Bible as obedience. Speaking of Jesus, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). Obedience is the conditional basis of the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's roles in our salvation.

Men who do not obey the Gospel will be lost. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Dear Reader, are you saved? Have you obeyed the Gospel yet? The Father Son, and Holy Spirit have done their parts toward your salvation. It only remains for you to fulfill your role in your own salvation.

Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

The Bible is the foundation of morality and marriage. Marriage is the support and stay of morality. Undermining marriage sabotages Bible teaching and thwarts righteousness. The Christian pattern for marriage is indissoluble unity. Marriage is to be had in honor among all—saint and sinner—and the bed undefiled (Heb. 13:4).

“Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith Jehovah of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously” (Mal. 2:14-16).

Malachi points out that God is witness between a man and his wife. He says God made one man for one woman. Though he had a residue of the Spirit from which to make other humans, God did not do so because he sought a godly seed. The prophet then declares that God is against divorce. He hates it! The teaching of this Old Testament prophet is like the teaching of Jesus on the subject of marriage and divorce. He warns against putting away because it undermines the home and destroys morality. It is strange that any teacher of religion would make allowance for what God clearly disallows. The emphatic and indisputable statement of divine revelation is that marriage is permanent and not temporary and fleeting. This

point must be featured and we must guard against saying, especially in public pronouncements, anything that would cloud what God made clear.

It is not uncommon for church leaders to make statements that confuse people about what the Bible teaches on the home and its importance. There has been a flurry of classes, lectures, seminars and workshops discussing marriage recently. Much of this creates doubt about the sanctity of the home and is designed to console those who have violated God's marriage law. Some seem to be hung up on trying to make people feel good about transgression of divine precepts. The result is clutter in an area that should be plain.

In discussing the important matter of the home we must talk about what makes a marriage according to the teaching of God's word.

What Is Marriage?

Marriage is sacred. It is the appointment of the living God. It is the coming together of two lives in the deepest possible unity. It is the surrender of separate individuality and the mingling of each in a common stream.

The following passages give us just about all the Bible says on the subject of marriage and divorce:

"And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). "and the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:22-24).

"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit

adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27- 28).

"It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:31-32).

"And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 19:3- 9).

"And there came unto him Pharisees, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? trying him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh: so that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house the

disciples asked him again of this matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:2-12).

"Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery" (Luke 16:18).

"For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man" (Rom. 7:2-3).

"But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife" (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

"A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39).

The Bible is emphatic in telling us that marriage is a man and woman who have committed themselves to live together as husband and wife and who therefore have been joined together by Jehovah so as to be considered by their creator as a unit—as one. They, of course, continue to have their separate identities. The man has his physical body and the woman has hers. They are two, but the two are one. Each is responsible for his or her conduct and each of them will stand individually before God in the last judgment. The woman is not guilty of the sins her husband may commit, and the man cannot

be credited for his wife's good character. They are one in the sense that Jehovah has honored their decision to be united in marriage. He sees and hears their pledge and they are joined together in his mind. Jesus said, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." It is God who joins the man and woman together. Man cannot undo what God has done.

The civil law is also a factor in marriage, but it is not the determining factor. For the good of society God commands us to obey civil rulers. God appoints that there shall be governments among men, but he does not define the government or give the nature of the public establishment. It does not matter what it is—republic, monarchy, democracy, dictatorship—we must honor it because society cannot endure in the absence of authority and rule keeping and punishment of evil doers and praise of those who do well (Rom. 13:1-7). The Bible tells the Christian to be a good citizen and pay his taxes.

Some governments exercise their God given right and legislate rules for marriage and the home. Other governments may have scant or no rules to control the home. Tribes in uncivilized countries may have only their tribal customs to govern marriage, and those customs may be vague.

The marriage custom of Jesus' day was not as structured as American civil law governing the home is today. In the first century in Judea there was no marriage license, country clerk, recording process, or family law center. If a man and woman consented to be married, they merely announced it to family and friends. Usually there was a celebration in the form of a feast and flowers. The groom's men and the bride's attendants sometimes brought the couple together as a sort of unofficial beginning place for the marriage. It was mostly a family and community arrangement. In the case of Boaz and Ruth the ceremony consisted of one man handing his shoe to another man in the presence of witnesses.

Regardless of what the civil rule for marriage is, the critical thing is God joining the man and woman together. Marriage is a four cornered contract. It involves (1) the man and (2) the woman and (3) the Lord God and (4) the social custom or law of the land. Civil law is to be obeyed to the extent it does not contradict divine law. Where there is a conflict in two laws, the lower law is set aside at the point of disagreement. "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

No matter what the civil rule is God joins the couple together. In every culture, clime, language and nation God is involved in the marriage. Malachi reminded his brothers that "Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth" (Mal. 2:14).

If God does not join the two together when they conform to the rules of their community, then it is no marriage and the children that may be born are illegitimate. Paul makes the argument that if God does not sanction the marriage the children are unclean, but when God does approve the marriages, the children are holy (1 Cor. 7:14).

God is involved in every marriage, joining the man and woman together, or the marriage is unsanctioned and the children are bastards. This consideration should forever settle the question of whether the unsaved person who is not in a covenant relationship with God is bound by the marriage laws of God. Even in a situation where the people do not recognize the God of the Bible, but follow Hinduism, Islam, tribal religion, or some other unbiblical system, God is involved in the marriage and joins the couple together. If not, their children are unclean. Those who say the marriage law of God is not universal and does not apply to folks who are not in a covenant relationship with God are stuck with the conclusion that children born to such marriages are illegitimate. This disagrees with Paul who says that such children are not

unclean but holy. If God joins together all who enter into a marriage— whether or not they are in a covenant relationship with God—then it still follows “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6).

What Is Divorce?

The Greek word translated “divorced” in our English Bibles is also translated dismiss, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty, and depart. The Hebrew word translated “divorce” in our English Bibles is also translated drive out, put away, be cast out, drive away, expel, and thrust out. Vine says the Greek word means, “to let loose from, to let go free.” Thayer says it means, “to dismiss from the house, to repudiate” and, in Mark 10:12 is used of a wife deserting her husband. In the Bible divorce is a departure, a going away, or being driven out, or sent away, a repudiation, or abandonment. It has nothing to do with family law court, or a judge on the bench, or county records, or the official declaration “divorce granted.” In our Western civilization we think of divorce as the action of a court of law in pronouncing the end of a marriage under civil usage. The truth is that a divorce happens when the man or the woman forsakes his or her partner with the intention of ending the marriage.

A husband may go away from his wife for a period of time to engage in business and it would not be a divorce in the Bible sense of that word. A wife may go away from her husband to visit her family, and it not be a Bible divorce. If either the husband or the wife intends to abandon the marriage and departs, that is divorce from a Bible viewpoint. This is made plain in Paul’s statement, “That the wife depart not from her husband (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried...” (1 Cor. 7:10-11). If the wife departs she is unmarried. The departure is the un-marriage—the divorce.

Our understanding of divorce is when a judge on the bench grants a cancellation of the marriage contract under modern day civil law. This procedure was unknown in New Testament times. In the days of Christ and of Paul there were no county clerks, county courthouses, family courts of law, marriage licenses or certificates, divorce lawyers, or divorce petitions. If a man threw his wife out, or if the wife departed from her husband without intent of returning, that was the divorce.

In our modern world, people may no longer live together as husband and wife because of the abandonment of the marriage bed of either one or the other, and a divorce is requested and awaited. We foolishly ask, Can we stop the divorce. Not from a Bible perspective. The divorce occurred when the husband or wife left without intending to return. It is a divorce when one or the other partner to the marriage contract is repudiated.

Paul says if the wife departs she is to remain unmarried. Her only marriage option is to be reconciled to her husband (1 Cor. 7:10-11). She is unmarried but she has a husband, an unmarried woman with a husband. The reason she has a husband is that while the civil, social, and community aspects of the marriage have ended, the act of God in regarding the pair as a unit is not canceled. In the mind of God they are still husband and wife. They are still one. They may not be living together. Society may have declared them divorced. Still, the divine tie continues and he is her husband and she is his wife. If a Christian man is married to an unbeliever, it is a marriage. If the unbelieving husband has a wife—she is his wife—he is her husband—“and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her” (1 Cor. 7:12). If a Christian woman is married to an unbelieving man, they are nevertheless married. They are husband and wife. His unbelief does not violate the marriage. If he is content to dwell with her, “let her not leave her husband” (1 Cor. 7:13). He is her husband and she is

his wife even though he is an unbeliever. The religious condition of either partner does not render the marriage invalid. If it did, the children would be unclean – illegitimate – unholy. Paul says this is not the case and he argues therefore that the marriage is intact.

“Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace” (1 Cor. 7:15). If the unbeliever departs without intending to return–divorces the believer–the Christian is not under bondage. Is the saint, therefore, free to marry another person under the rules for marriage given in the Bible? The text gives no express information on whether Paul allows the Christian partner in such a marriage to marry again. The stringent rule Jesus gave for putting away one’s marriage partner and marrying another would make it mandatory for Paul to express plainly and bluntly that abandonment on the part of an unbeliever permits the saint to marry someone else without sinning against God’s marriage law. When Jesus gave the rule for marriage, divorce, and remarriage his disciples were shocked and concluded it is better not to marry than to be in an inescapable contract (Matt. 19:3-12). If Paul now gives an exception other than fornication it would seem necessary for him to clearly state it. We must not make Paul contradict Christ. We know the marriage rule is for a wife not to leave her husband and for a husband not to leave his wife. If the weaker vessel in a marriage covenant is under insupportable duress–abused verbally, physically, mentally and spiritually–she may depart, but may not marry another man. Her only option to living celibate is to be reconciled to her mate (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

We know, therefore, that under circumstances Paul would require a person to live without sexual intercourse. This puts to silence all those “it is better to marry than to burn” arguments designed to set one divine precept against another hallowed principle. If a husband is called away to the service

of his country and must be separated from his wife for a long period of time it is required that both the man and the woman abstain from sexual activity. Sickness and disability may make it impossible for one partner to a marriage to perform sexually, but that circumstance does not permit the healthy and able partner to misbehave. We have put such a premium on sex in our society that we discount the possibility and necessity of self-control. It may not be easy but we can be eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

Paul says that if two heathens are married and one of them is converted to Christ and the other is not a believer, and the unbeliever decides to quit the marriage, the child of God is not "under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace" (1 Cor. 7:15). The heathen is obviously attempting to put pressure on the believer to forsake the church and the hope of heaven. The unbeliever is trying to enslave the believer and force the saint to abandon the right way. The unbeliever is creating strife, confusion, and disharmony. Paul simply says the child of God does not have to put up with such tactics: God has called us in peace. Let the unbeliever depart (divorce). You can't do anything about it. You are not in bondage to the evil temper of the unbeliever in such a case. Still, the apostle says nothing about the believer's right to marry someone else.

It is interesting to note that the two heathens were married while they were both heathens. God had joined them together and they were one flesh. They were under the marriage rule of God, which has been in effect since creation (Matt. 19:8). Jesus restored it and it will continue while the earth lasts. One of the two is converted, and the unconverted partner makes a problem for the believer. Paul says, You don't have to put up with that. If the unbeliever leaves, let it happen. You are not under bondage. You have no obligation to attempt to live with someone who does not want to live with you because of your faith.

There may be many reasons for putting away, but only one reason for divorce and remarriage. If a brutal husband endangers the lives of the children and threatens the mental stability of his wife, she may depart (divorce), but she may not marry some other man. She can be reconciled to her husband, but is not to have another husband of a different kind. An unbeliever may make life so miserable for the Christian mate that separation happens, but the believer is not free to marry some other person. That permission is not given and that license is not granted. You do not have to be enslaved to someone who is trying to force you to give up your hope of glory, but your alternative is to be single.

The marriage law of God is very strict. The rule is one man for one woman for life, with fornication as the single exception. We must stridently uphold the sanctity of marriage. We must ardently obey the God-given rules for the home. The future of the church and of the nation depends upon maintaining good, solid family relationship. There may be exceptions, but let us focus on the rule. Our children need to be taught by both example and word the sacredness of the family. Let us cease trying to find excuses for failing to walk by the rule to which we have attained. "Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt- offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Miracles of the Bible

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

The idea of a miracle holds fascination for many people because it is charged with enigma. Strange and unknown things somehow appeal to the human psyche. Everybody talks about

miracles but few know what they are talking about. The first step in discussing miracles is to say what we are talking about and note what we are not talking about. The purpose of this study is to consider the miracles of the Bible. We are not surveying unusual events in the human experience that some wrongly call miracles and that have no connection with the Word of God. Things like Unidentified Flying Objects and little green men with antennae coming out of their heads and long, snake-like fingers, and squeaky voices are figment and not miracle. Neither are we discussing the magician's tricks. Furthermore, not every strange thing that is difficult to explain is a miracle.

The word "miracle" in the New Testament translates two Greek words. These two words are variously translated "miracle, sign, token, wonder, ability, power, might, strength, violence, and virtue." The King James translators use the word 37 times. The American Standard translators use the word only 9 times. Often where the King James translates "miracle" the American Standard uses the word "sign." A miracle is a sign, but not every sign is a miracle.

The New Testament speaks of signs or miracles performed by agency of the devil. In warning of a coming apostasy, Paul wrote: Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery

of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:1-11). The lawless one would come with the power of Satan to perform signs and lying wonders. In the book of Revelation the miraculous power of evil spirits is mentioned. "And he doeth great signs (miracles), that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men" (Rev 13:13).

"And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs (miracles) which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived" (Rev. 13:14). "For they are spirits of demons, working signs (miracles); which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs (miracles) in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20). Malignant spirits, under the control of the great Red Dragon, were able to perform wonders and signs to deceive people and bring them under the power of the Prince of Darkness. When the empire of Satan is utterly crushed by the heavenly army of the Captain of our salvation, these wonder working spirits will be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

In the book of Acts we are told of a pretender to magic powers who amazed the people with his sorcery. "But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries" (Acts 8:8-11). Simon of Samaria was a charlatan, but the people were fooled. His humbug was effective. He was a fraud, but the people didn't know it. The great and the small in the city of Samaria thought Simon was the real thing. They jumped on his bandwagon.

This Samaritan, Simon, was a conscious agent for Satan, and knew he was using trickery to deceive the people. Every generation produces swindlers who exploit gullible people eager to believe in voodooism. It is strange that people would rather accept claptrap than truth. The kind of signs these people do cannot favorably compare with bona fide miracles. Philip, a preacher of righteousness, came to Samaria and when the people of Samaria "heard and saw" the signs which he did they knew they had been bamboozled by Simon.

"And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city" (Acts 8:6-8).

Satan has real power and can pull wool over the eyes of sincere folks. We need to be alert to this and not allow ourselves to be hoodwinked by quacks. To be guided by astrology, Tarot cards, alchemy, palm readers, and fortunetellers is about as sensible as making life-changing decisions on the basis of a message found in a Chinese after-dinner-cookie.

In the first century, the devil was allowed to use his mystical power without limit. The wonder-working power of God was also fully unleashed. There was a great contest. The supernatural power of God was arrayed against the supernatural power of the devil. The devil lost! Demon possession of Bible times was a display of Satan's power. In the case of the woman with the "spirit of infirmity," we are told that Satan had bound her for eighteen years (Luke 13:16). The maid with "a spirit of divination" was a tool of evil spirits (Acts 16:16-18). Every time demons came into contact with one having the supernatural power of God, the demon lost. In each case, the demon was cast out. In one case, demons were sent into a herd of swine (Matt. 8:31-32). They could not predominate in the presence of divine omnipotence.

Satan was defeated. Jesus' victory over death was the final blow. Evil was pulverized. The terms of surrender were dictated by the conquering Christ. He who used his power to bind many was himself bound. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). "And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time" (Rev. 20:2-3). The vanquished Satan will never again be allowed to use his supernatural power to afflict humanity. God also restricts his power to natural means by his own choice. We have the sweet assurance that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Having looked at fake miracles and having considered Satanic signs, we now consider the miracles performed by the power of

God that are recorded in the New Testament. A study of supernatural acts executed by divine power will demonstrate the nature of miracles performed in the name of God. There are several conditions that determine what constitutes a miracle performed by the power of the Creator. First, the heavenly miracles of the first century were always successful. No applicant for miraculous healing in the days of Jesus and the apostles ever went away disappointed. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them (Matt. 4:24). "And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16). "And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from thence: and many followed him; and he healed them all" (Matt. 12:15). "And he came forth, and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14). "And there came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at this feet; and he healed them" (Matt. 15:30). "And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them" (Luke 4:40).

There were no failures! No one ever went away from a "healing service" of Jesus or the apostles still sick, possessed, or bound. We are told of an epileptic the disciples of Jesus could not heal, but the Lord healed him (Matt. 17:15-18). There was no failure in this situation. Jesus, we are told, "did not many mighty works" in Nazareth (Matt. 13:58). The reason he did not do many miracles in his hometown was not that he could not do it, but the people did not believe him and therefore did not come to him for healing. He was not going to break their doors down to demonstrate his divine credentials. If a person wants to reject Jesus, he is allowed to do it. This, obviously, does not constitute failure, but

lack of opportunity.

There never was a failure. So, the first thing we learn is that God-authorized miracles never fail. No sufferer who applied to Jesus or his disciples for healing was told that his lack of faith caused the cure not to materialize. Second, the cure was always perfect. No person was ever partially cured. If God heals supernaturally, the cure must be complete, or the power of God is inadequate. It is true that on one occasion at Bethsaida a blind man was brought to Jesus with a request that he be healed (Mark 8:22). Jesus "spit on his eyes" and said "Seest thou aught" (Mark 8:23). The man answered, "I see men, for I behold them as trees, walking" (Mark 8:24). Jesus laid his hands upon the man and he "saw all things clearly" (Mark 8:25). Why Jesus healed this man in stages I do not know, but it is true that the blind man never left the presence of Jesus until he "saw all things clearly." In supernatural healing there is never a period of recuperation. The sick person does not begin to get better and over a period of weeks or months or years finally recover health. Miracles of healing always take place instantly. Third, there was no relapse. There is not a single instance in all of the New Testament where any person healed by the power of God ever suffered from the same complaint. A blind person who received his sight did not at a later time retrogress to darkness. The miracles of Jesus and the apostles were long lasting. Fourth, it was instantaneous. There was no waiting period. The cure was always abrupt.

"Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive

something from them. But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him" (Acts 3:1-10). The God-authorized miracles of the New Testament were always without failure, or setback, perfect, and immediate. Anything that purports to be a miracle but that does not have these earmarks is not a God-authorized miracle. It may be a man-made fraud, it may be a Satan inspired fake, but it is not an act of God.

The miracles performed by approval of Jehovah in the New Testament were for the purpose of confirming revelation. God spoke through his appointed representatives and then sealed the message by signs and wonders. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). Nicodemus was right about that! The message of the New Testament is confirmed by signs and wonders. "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). If God performed miracles today, they would be available to all and would not be selective. "God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). They would be immediate and perfect and there would be no regression. The purpose of God's miracles was to confirm his word. "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen" (Mark 16:20). When that purpose was realized, miracles ceased. Satan is defeated. The

truth is established. Miracles are no more. They are not needed. If miracles had remained after the truth of the gospel was certified to be of God, then many people would follow Jesus for the wrong reason. If believers are put under a glass and protected from sickness and hurting, many would come to Jesus for the loaves and fishes. We are cautioned to not labor for the meat that is perishing, but for that which endures to eternal life (John 6:27).

“If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory” (Col. 3:1-4).

Holy Spirit

By Frazier Conley
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...we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given
(Acts 19:2 ASV)

What is the object or goal of the following discussion, what is the subject? The subject is, “Holy Spirit baptism.” Why does it come up for discussion? It is a New Testament phrase about which conflicting ideas are expressed – and because it is a good starting point for understanding the whole doctrine of the Spirit.

The following is a complete list of the passages where the

phrase is used:

- Matthew 3:11: “I indeed ‘baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire:”
- Mark 1:8: “I baptized you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit.”
- Luke 3:16: “John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water, but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and (in) fire.”
- John 1:33: “And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me. Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit.”
- Acts 1:5: “For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.”
- Acts 11:16: “And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit.”

Some would add 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Later, however, I will show that this passage does not belong in the list, at least not as it is usually interpreted.

What are some of the diverse ideas Bible students have when they speak of being “baptized in the Holy Spirit?” The following list summarizes several of these:

- Some will say that it is the Holy Spirit entering into a person and bringing him “regeneration.” It is salvation, as they suppose, that is accomplished.
- Similarly, others hold it is the saving presence or action of the Holy Spirit at baptism – water being the external part of the baptism and the Spirit the internal part. Some of these

will teach that the Holy Spirit in baptism is “non-miraculous.” Others will say that it sometimes, or always, involves miracle power.

- People who hold the “Pentecostal” viewpoint will affirm that at conversion one receives an indwelling of the Spirit. Then, subsequent to conversion, Christians should seek to receive power from the Holy Spirit. The empowerment must involve speaking in “unknown tongues.” This, they say, is Holy Spirit baptism.
- Still others explain that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special measure of power (the “baptismal” measure), bestowed exclusively on the apostles and the house of Cornelius.

Are any of these correct? The thesis here is that none of them is exactly right. The following statement is Holy Spirit baptism in a nutshell. The remainder of the discussion in this book will set forth a defense of the following definition in the context of the larger New Testament theology of the Spirit:

Holy Spirit baptism is that event of the first century in which God gave divine notice to the world of the commencement of the age of salvation in Christ. He did so by imparting to a large number of people a variety of extraordinary Holy Spirit empowerments, including especially prophetic proclamation. This event was initiated on the day of Pentecost, as depicted in Acts 2. It ceased with the fading of the apostolic period. The manifestations were not only attention getting, but also served to advance and confirm the gospel. Receiving the Holy Spirit in this office though associated with an attitude receptive to the gospel was not the means or the instrument of one’s personal salvation; nor was it the Pauline doctrine of the indwelling Spirit; rather, it was simple empowerment.

Here it is suggested that one should not say, “Holy Spirit baptism” but, *the* Holy Spirit baptism.” It was a specific event, which had a beginning and an ending.

The Spirit received for empowering proclamation

To confirm the distinction made in Acts between reception of the Holy Spirit and salvation itself, one first needs to look carefully at Luke 4:18-19. There Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

The Messiah receives the Spirit in order to preach or proclaim the good news of salvation, the arrival of the acceptable year of the Lord. He did not receive the Spirit for his own personal sanctification or for imparting the Spirit to others for indwelling sanctification. Throughout the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts the Spirit was received by persons, and then it is specified that the recipients as a result proclaimed and preached the gospel.' The gospel of salvation is *proclaimed* through the empowerment of the Spirit. *Salvation* comes when the hearer of the proclamation responds obediently to what is proclaimed.

In this connection one should especially note Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:38-39; and 5:31-32. In Luke 24 forgiveness of sins upon repentance is first mentioned (Luke 24:46-47). Then separately the conferral upon the apostles empowering them for preaching is noted (Luke 24:48-49). The preaching of salvation by the Spirit is not the salvation. The same order and distinction is in Acts 2:38-39. Peter first proclaims repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins. Then he mentions the reception of the Spirit – a reception that in Luke's gospel and the book of Acts, time and again, is an empowerment for proclamation. In Acts 5:30-32 first there is

the proclamation of the gospel, the promise of repentance, and the forgiveness based thereon. Second, there is the mention of the Spirit who empowers testimony. The role of the Spirit is to empower the proclamation, not to indwell directly and sanctify by his presence, as described in Paul's letters. The forgiveness or salvation comes when the gospel is preached and the correct response follows – repentance and baptism. In summary, one (a) learns about the salvation from preaching inspired by the Spirit: (b) and one responds to the preaching and obtains forgiveness by a penitent baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. The two matters are not identical.

As noted, among the powers bestowed during the period of the Holy Spirit baptism was the gift of inspiration, prophetic utterance. Inspiration was a special empowerment, although *it* was not technically "miraculous." Nevertheless miracles, manifestations, predictions, and tongues usually accompanied inspiration, which authenticated the inspiration.

How conferred?

If the baptism in the Holy Spirit consisted of a widespread bestowal of special Holy Spirit powers conferred upon the inaugural generation of the church, how was the power imparted? Certain principles, set forth especially in Acts, arise from the New Testament description.

It will be shown that:

- (1) the extraordinary empowerment was conferred *directly* (without apostolic hands) only upon the twelve at Pentecost, and the house of Cornelius;
- (2) through apostolic hands alone was such power conferred to others (Cornelius received the "same" gift as the apostles so far as the manner of reception – direct from heaven – but not the measure of power given to the apostolic office, which included the ability to confer gifts of the Holy Spirit to

others by laying on of hands);

(3) the power necessarily ceased with the apostolic age; and (very important);

(4) the reception of such power was only indirectly related to individual personal salvation.

Basic facts.

Here are some basic facts about Holy Spirit baptism. As noted, the expression “baptize in the Holy Spirit” or its verbal equivalent occurs only six times in scripture (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). Acts has the most to say about it – the expression itself however occurs in Acts only in quotations from Jesus. The author of Acts, in his own usage, wanted to reserve the word *baptize* for (water) immersion. Instead, Luke speaks of the Holy Spirit baptism typically by such phrases as “filled with the Spirit.”

The first reference in Acts states:

...he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which said he, ye heard from me: For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

Note the following facts from these verses:

(1) The baptism in the Holy Spirit was “the promise of the Father.”

(2) It would occur, for the apostles, within a few days.

(3) This event would bring to its recipients an empowerment for witness.

The preamble to Acts 1 is Luke 24:36-53, "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Note again that "the promise of the Father" (the Holy Spirit baptism) would include "power from on high."

With reference to the apostles (others would receive empowerment in due time), the "promise of the Father" was plainly kept on the day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit from heaven (Acts 2:1-13). They were empowered to speak in tongues. The whole event was accompanied by a sound from heaven like wind (which filled the entire chamber); and flames in appearance like fire, resting on each of them. Peter explains in Acts 2:33 that the Father had imparted the promised Holy Spirit to Jesus, and that Jesus then "poured out" upon the apostles that which had been seen and heard. This was the event which empowered the apostolic witness (see Acts 1:8).

When Peter began his sermon in Acts 2, he said:

... but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of my spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the day of the lord comes, that great and notable day. And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:16-21).

There is no ambiguity in Peter's introduction: "This is that." The event which had just been witnessed: the sound, the fire-

like phenomenon, and the languages were the fulfillment (or the inauguration of the fulfillment) of the prophecy found in Joel.

We pointed out that the prophecy of Joel is the “promise of God” – the promised “pouring out” of his Spirit. Therefore, when John the baptist spoke of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and when Jesus is quoted in Acts 1:5; 11:16. The reference is to the prophecy of Joel in chapter 2:28-32. Clearly, if anyone is to understand the baptism in the Holy Spirit, he must understand Joel’s prophecy.

Summary

In Acts the following are related or correlated: (1) the baptism in the Holy Spirit. (2) the promise of the Father, (3) the coming of the Holy Spirit, (4) the reception of power from on high, and (5) the events of Acts 2:1-4. This included (6) being filled with the Spirit, (7) the sound that filled the house. (8) the fire- like flames. (9) the empowerment to speak in tongues, (10) the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, and thus, (11) the pouring out of God’s Spirit.

John the baptist declared that he baptized with water, but the Lord would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Did John affirm that water baptism replaces Spirit baptism? Many Bible students take it this way. However, it is quite indisputable that Jesus ordained water baptism for his church (Acts 8:36-39; 10:47-48; 22:16; Eph. 5:26; et al.).

Please note carefully (it is frequently overlooked) that the word *baptizo*, when used literally and without any specification of a medium, has inherent in it the element of water (Oepke, *TDNT* 1:539; and see most Greek lexicons). *Baptizo* should therefore, in many passages, be rendered “immerse in water” and resurrected to a new life. By definition in such passages it cannot be understood to refer to a baptism “in Spirit.” It is clear that John was not

teaching that Jesus was going replace water baptism with Spirit baptism.

Since the elements of the two baptisms are not the point of contrast, what is? The comparison is rather John's ministry, his preparation for the kingdom, versus its later inauguration with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. John's ministry could not claim the fulfillment of Joel 2. His ministry was a baptism of water only, looking forward to the coming of Christ. Christ, in the new age, not only authorizes a water baptism, but at the inaugural he confers an overwhelming of the Holy Spirit on the infant church.

John's ministry (thus his baptism) was preparatory; Jesus' ministry (including the baptizing in the Holy Spirit), in contrast, was the consummation. From another perspective (looking toward the future), Jesus' ministry, with its culmination on the day of Pentecost, was initiatory.

¹One should notice John the Baptist (Luke 1:14-17); Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45); Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79); Simeon (Luke 2:25-35); Jesus (Luke 4:14-15, cf. 16-21; 10:21-22); disciples (Luke 12:12); the Twelve (Acts 1:8; 24ff, cf 2:17ff; 4:8ff, 31; 10:19ff, 34ff; 11:12, 14); Stephen (Acts 6:5, 8-10ff; 7:1ff, cf. 7:51); Philip (8:29ff; Paul (Acts 9:17, 20); the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2, 4ff); and the Ephesian 12 (Acts 19:6). Other Luke-Acts material could be cited which suggest something similar.

Musical Instruments in the

Temple

By Owen D. Olbricht

Vol. 122, No. 4

An argument often made for the use of musical instruments in worship is that by worshipping in the temple early Christians showed they had no problem with their being used in worship. A proof text states, “So continuing daily with one accord the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46; NKJV).

Some things that are assumed are not stated in the above passage—that Christians were:

- Assembling in the area of the temple where Jews were worshiping.
- Worshiping where musical instruments were being used.
- Giving approval of musical instruments by assembling in the temple.
- Meeting during the time of day when the Levites were singing with musical instrumentals.

These assumptions have at least four major flaws.

Apostles' Teaching

First – Instead of engaging in Jewish practices, early Christians continued to observe what Jesus commanded as taught by the apostles (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42). The apostles could not have taught Christians in an assembly that included Jewish leaders, for they threatened and flogged the apostles for preaching Jesus in the temple (Acts 4:1-3, 17-18, 21; 5:28, 33, 40).

Neither example nor command to use musical instruments is found in the writings of the apostles. If such are not found, then early Christians were neither using nor approving them,

consequently, musical instruments cannot be used based on apostolic authority.

Where They Met

Second – Christians met in Solomon’s porch, not in the section of the temple where the Levites sang with musical instruments. Herod’s temple complex was not like a large, modern church auditorium where all the worshipers gathered in one place. Josephus described the external dimensions of the temple as follows:

According to Josephus (Ant xv.11.3 [400], each side was about 180 m. (600 ft) long (500 cubits, according to the Mish. Middoth ii.1, though here we may suspect the influence of Ezk. 41:20). (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. Four, Q-Z, fully revised, 1988, p 771).

The temple complex, which was 600 feet by 600 feet, was larger than four football fields. Its outer walls enclosed four inner sections of the temple: the sanctuary that was in the upper court, which was adjacent to the woman’s court. These were inside the outer most court, the large Gentile’s court.

In the upper court was the temple sanctuary (30 by 90 feet), which included the holy place (30 by 60 feet) that only the priests and Levites could enter, and the most holy place (30 by 30 feet) that only the high priest could enter once a year. The more than 3,000 Christians (Acts 2:41) could neither have assembled in the sanctuary of the temple where the priests alone could go nor could they have crowded into it.

Between the upper court and the woman’s court were the fifteen steps where the Levites sang with musical instruments during the morning and evening sacrifices.

Fifteen steps led up to the Upper Court, which was bounded by a wall, and where was the celebrated Nicanor Gate, covered

*with Corinthian brass. Here the Levites, who conducted the musical part of the service, were placed (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 245.).*

This is confirmed by the Jewish Mishna:

*And Levites without numbers with harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets and other musical instruments were there upon the fifteen steps leading down from the court of the Israelites to the court of the women, corresponding to the fifteen songs of ascents in the Psalms [120- 134]. It was upon these [and not at the side of the altar where they performed at the time of the offering of sacrifices] that the Levites stood with their instruments of music and sang their songs (Everett Ferguson, *A Cappella Music in Public Worship of the Church*, Abilene Texas, Biblical Research Press, 1972, p. 31; quoted from a translation of *The Mishna* by Herbert Dandy, London: Oxford University Press, 1933).*

The walled woman's court and the upper court were inside the large Gentiles' court from which Jesus drove the Jews who were buying and selling animals (Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45; John 2:14). Solomon's porch, approximately 600 feet long, where Christians met (Act 5:12) was open to the Gentile court on one side and enclosed by the outer wall on the other side.

By meeting in Solomon's porch, Christians could assemble without seeing or hearing the Jewish services. Walls and more than 300 feet, a football field length, separated the assembled Christians from the animal sacrifices and the fifteen steps where the Levites were singing and playing instruments. When they entered the temple, they could pass through the outer gates and walk across the Gentile court to Solomon's porch without coming near to the place where Jewish religious ceremonies were being conducted.

The Levites sang with instruments during the morning and evening sacrifices (Exod. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3, 4; 1 Chron. 16:40-42). It is not a foregone conclusion that Christians met during these times, for they had at least eight hours between the morning and evening sacrifices when they could meet.

Christians met in the temple because they needed a large meeting place, like Solomon's porch, and not because they desired to worship where the Jews were worshiping. The burden of proof is on those who claim that by meeting in the temple Christians showed that they were not against musical instruments being used in worship.

Third – If Christians saw nothing wrong with worshiping in the temple where the Levites were singing with instruments, the same would have been true concerning their assembling where animal sacrifices were being used in worship, for the musical renditions were associated with the animal sacrifices. Their attitude toward the one would have been the same as their attitude toward the other.

When David brought the Ark of the Covenant into the tabernacle, he worshiped with singing, instrumental music, dancing, and animal sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:17-29). Solomon did the same, except for dancing, when he brought the ark into the temple (2 Chron. 5:11-14). After this he prayed. "Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple" (2 Chron. 7:1).

The ceremony continued with Solomon and all the people worshiping in the temple by sacrificing hundreds of oxen and sheep to the Lord while the Levites played musical instruments (2 Chron. 7:5-7). If God showed his approval of musical instruments in worship, thus acceptable for Christian worship, by filling the temple with a cloud (2 Chron. 5:13, 14), as some have argued, then God's lighting the sacrifice and his glory filling the temple when animals were sacrificed (2

Chron. 7:1) showed his approval of them in worship, hence meaning they are all right for Christian worship. If not, why not?

Some would object to this line of argument by contending that the New Testament teaches that Jesus' sacrifice replaced animal sacrifices but nowhere states that musical instruments are no longer to be used. Sin sacrifices were replaced by the death of Jesus (Heb. 5:1-3; 7:27; 9:9-14; 24-28; 10:1-18), but what passage in the New Testament specifically states that worship sacrifices were abolished?

Worship offerings such as thank, freewill, first fruit, and peace offerings were as prevalent as sin sacrifices. Neither Jesus, the book of Acts, nor any other New Testament documents specifically state that worship sacrifices were abolished. If a specific statement must be made before an Old Testament practice is not to be used, then worship sacrifices are still acceptable to God. However, the statement that the "first" was replaced by the "second" (Heb. 10:9) is proof that not only worship with animal sacrifices was abolished, but that the complete Old Testament sacrificial and worship systems were set aside. The only way to bring any practice of the Old Testament into Christian worship is to find that practice taught in the New Testament.

Singers Were Male Levites

Fourth – Male members (not women) of the tribe of Levi (2 Chron. 5:12; 35:14, 15; Neh. 11:22) were the only ones who sang with musical instruments during the animal sacrifices (1 Chron. 15:16-26; 2 Chron. 5:6-14; 29:27-35; 35:13-16). If temple worship can be used as a pattern, then singing and playing of instrument should be done only by male Levites.

Other Considerations

Some argue that Christians should feel free to practice what they read in the book of Psalms about worshiping with musical instruments. If this is true, then Christians should follow the statements in Psalms concerning the use of animal sacrifices in worship (Pss. 20:1-3; 50:7, 8; 51:18, 19; 66:13-15; 96:8, 9; see also Jer. 17:26; 33:15-18). David wrote that he would “offer in His tent [tabernacle] sacrifices with shouts of joy” (Ps. 27:6; NASB). Christians also should praise God with a “two-edged sword in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the written judgment” (Ps. 149:6b-9a; NKJV). If musical instrument should be accepted in worship based on Psalms, so also should animal sacrifices and swords for vengeance.

Altars for Sacrifice

Altars for worship sacrifices were used before the Law (Gen. 8:20), during the Law age (Exod. 20:24; 24:4-6; 27:1-6), and were seen in heavenly visions by John while he was on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 6:9; 8:3, 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7). If Christians can use musical instruments because they were used in worship before the Law commanded in the Old Testament and pictured in the book of Revelation, then they can use sacrifice altars in worship. If anyone should respond that the altar in the book of Revelation is symbolical, then musical instruments should also be considered symbolical.

Synagogues

All historical evidence indicates that Christians worshipped without musical instruments for many centuries after the beginning of the church. Everett Ferguson wrote, “Recent

studies put the introduction of instrumental music even later than the dates found in reference books. It was perhaps as late as the tenth century when the organ was played as part of the service" (Ferguson, *ibid.*, 81).

Some explain that the reason for non-use of musical instruments in worship by Christians was that they were influenced by Jewish synagogues where instruments were not used. They gathered in homes (Rom. 16:3-6; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2) instead of Jewish synagogues. Even though they came out of Judaism, they were guided by the apostles instead of Jewish practices and traditions. The question then is:

Were early Christians influenced by temple worship to look favorably on musical instrument or the synagogue to turn against them? The answer is neither. Apostolic teaching, not Jewish customs, was what governed Christian worship.

Conclusion

No conclusive argument can be made that Christians associated with, accepted, or used instrumental music based on their assembling in the temple. Even though Christians gathered there for a short period of time before persecution scattered them (Acts 8:1), they met in Solomon's porch, a meeting place far removed and isolated from the singing and playing of musical instruments and animal sacrifices. Instead of following Jewish practices, Christians continued in the apostles teaching (Acts 2:42:). Christians should do the same today.

Cotham's Comments on the Holy Spirit

By Perry B. Cotham

Vol. 108, No. 08

A misconception of the Holy Spirit and his work for man's salvation leads to all kinds of religious errors. All that we can ever know about the Spirit and his work comes from the Scriptures. It is tragic to see some turn away from what the Bible teaches in favor of an inner, mystical longing, which they mistake for information about God.

The Holy Spirit is a person. There are three beings in one Godhead (Acts 17:29; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), but three beings possess the divine nature.

The Holy Spirit gave us the Holy Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Eph. 6:17). The apostles were guided by the Spirit into all of the truth (John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:3). In conviction, conversion, and edification the Holy Spirit operates on the heart of man only through the inspired Word of God (Psa. 19:7; Psa. 73:24; Psa. 119:50, Psa. 119:93, Psa. 119:105, Psa. 119:130). "The Gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Spirit operates through the words of revelation, which are spirit and life (John 6:63).

The Bible plainly says that the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians. Paul wrote, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

How does the Spirit indwell the child of God? He indwells directly or indirectly. There is a difference in stating the fact and in stating the method (the how) of the Spirit's

indwelling. The Bible does not teach that the Spirit dwells in Christians apart from the inspired Word. Many religionists have the idea of a personal, direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the child of God. They think the Spirit gives the believer extra help besides the Word of God. This, of course, denies the all-sufficiency of God-breathed writing to make the man of God complete. Of course, this belief leads to all kinds of "experiences" and "feelings."

Let us note some things: (1) God dwells in Christians (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 4:12-16). Does God dwell in his children directly or indirectly? It is indirect, through obedience to the word: "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him" (1 John 3:24). (2) Christ dwells in Christians (Col. 1:27). But how does Christ dwell in us? Paul explains, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:17). "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). (3) The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians. The Spirit is in each faithful member of the church the same way that God and Christ are in the saved. Neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Spirit dwells directly, personally, in Christians. As the Christian obeys the Spirit's message, the Spirit's influences are in him, and he brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Comparing Ephesians 5:17-19 with Colossians 3:16 shows how the Spirit is in the child of God. To be "filled with the Spirit" is to let the "word of Christ" dwell in you richly. There is no statement of Scripture saying the Holy Spirit dwells literally, directly, and personally in the child of God. If Jehovah the Father and Jesus the Son can indwell Christians indirectly and figuratively, the Holy Spirit can do the same.

Children of God cherish the Spirit's message and live by it, and in this way the Holy Spirit dwells in them and in the church. The teaching that the Spirit works directly – separate

and apart from the Word of God in the heart of the alien sinner or the child of God, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God ... that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We have the Bible and it is sufficient to make us what God wants us to be.

The Seal and Earnest of the Spirit (E. Trimble)

By Earl Trimble

Vol. 107, No. 12

In its noun form the word *earnest* appears only three times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14). In both of the Second Corinthian verses the word is used in the phrase, *earnest of the Spirit*. In the Ephesians verse it appears in the phrase, *earnest of our inheritance*.

Thayer defines the Greek *arrabon* (translated *earnest* in these three passages) as "a foretaste and a pledge of future blessedness" (p. 75). Interestingly, Thayer likens *foretaste* to "tasted" as found in Hebrews 6:4 ("tasted of the heavenly gift"), in Hebrews 6:5 ("tasted the good word of God"), and I Peter 2:3 ("tasted that the Lord is gracious"). The idea of *tasting* is "to partake of, to enjoy, to experience."

An analysis of these three verses reveals the contextual usage of the word *earnest*.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:5

"Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the

Spirit in our hearts."

"Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Attention is called to three words used in these two verses as defined by Thayer:

1. Anointing (*chrisma*): "a miraculous gift"
2. Seal (*sphragidzo*): "to mark with a seal"
3. Earnest (*arrabon*): "foretaste and pledge of future blessedness"

Notice also the usage of the expression, an *anointing*, as referring to a miraculous gift in I John 2:20, I John 2:27:

"And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things ... his anointing teacheth you concerning all things."

Brother Guy N. Woods (in his chart #20, used in his debate with Given O. Blakely on the subject of the Holy Spirit) says (regarding the word *earnest*),

The word is used three times in the New Testament, but always in a figurative sense: in the first (2 Cor. 1:22) it is applied to the gifts of the Holy Spirit which God bestowed upon the apostles, and by which he might be said to have hired them to be the servants of his Son; and which were the earnest, assurance, and commencement of those far superior blessings which he would bestow on them in the life to come as the wages of their faithful services: in the two latter (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14), it is applied to the gifts bestowed on Christians generally upon whom, after baptism, the apostles laid their hands, and which were to them an earnest of obtaining a heavenly habitation and inheritance, upon the supposition of their fidelity.

The contextual setting wherein the words (*anointing, seal, and earnest*) are used, show their relativity to the Holy Spirit as

being the miraculous gifts that God bestowed upon the apostles and early Christians through agency of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, their primary application was to those of that age and not to us today. The word *anointing* is not applicable to us in any sense, who live in the post-miraculous era. The words *seal* and *earnest* could be said to apply to us today only in a secondary sense.

Ephesians 1:13-14

“. . . ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's. own possession. . . .”

In commenting on Ephesians 1:13, J. W. Shepherd says, “They [the Ephesians] received the gift of the Spirit in its miraculous manifestation. We do not; but we receive it in our hearts and bring them in subjection to it” (*Gospel Advocate Commentary*, p. 27). Commenting on verse 14 (p. 28), he uses the meaning of Romans 8:16-17 to illustrate the meaning of the *earnest of our inheritance*. He says, “It is rather the very work of the Spirit himself.” Then he explains how the Christian's godly life, as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), is the assurance of God's approval. David Lipscomb adds: “So much of real spiritual blessings as he enjoys is heaven already in his heart; what he has in the work and fruits of the Spirit is for him alike pledge and foretaste.”

Is it reasonable that the Spirit, himself, given to Christians as a seal and earnest for confirming God's approval and guarantee (as some contend) would himself be dependent upon “outside evidence” (i.e., God's word) to confirm his indwelling? It is the result of the indwelling, and not the indwelling itself, that serves as the seal and earnest. Testimony and confirmation by the Spirit is dependent upon action and not passivity on his part unless there was an effect, the cause would serve no purpose. Some, in contending for a direct, personal indwelling, are ready to admit to direct operations (miraculous manifestations) of the Spirit in

the Christian's life today.

Actually the Spirit proves his indirect indwelling, not in being passive, but rather by being active in producing fruit in the Christian as the result of his teaching. This work performed by the Spirit in today's Christian is accomplished indirectly through the medium of the all-sufficient, Spirit-empowered word (John 6:63, John 6:68; Acts 20:32; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12, et al).

Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

By Allen Webster

Vol. 107, No. 11

Time is changing. The new soon becomes old; the modern becomes ancient; the technological breakthrough becomes yesterday's news; the popular becomes lost in the latest; and the up-to-date is soon out-of-date.

Eternal truth never changes. It reads the same today as yesterday and as it will tomorrow. It is "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Those who would change it become "accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9) and find that it will meet them in judgment unchanged (Rev. 20:12).

Modern man feels he has outgrown the ancient gospel. He thinks an absolute standard is obsolete. Exaltation of self and sensuality replace the idea of sin and spiritual death. He ridicules blood and the need for forgiveness. He scoffs at the virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, and miraculous resurrection of Christ. He regards these as myths of a bygone era.

Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

Never! The only way man can outgrow the gospel is to conquer sin. He has not. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" was true in Paul's day and is true today. Sin is still the transgression of the law of God (I John 3:4), which can include violating one's conscience (Rom. 14:23), omitting a duty (James 4:17), and lawlessness (I John 3:4).

Never! God, not man, determines what is sinful; sin will not change. Men may call sin by another name, but that will not alter what it really is. Forgiveness is still the most basic spiritual need that man has (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23). The only way a person can be forgiven is through the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

Never! The gospel is the power to overcome temptation (Eph. 6:17), and man needs its power because temptation is still with us. Mankind has not conquered carnal desires. He still gives in to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17). He cannot overcome without the power of the written word (Heb. 4:12).

Never! The devil is still "as a roaring lion" walking about "seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). Man is still in danger; therefore he needs the unchanged gospel, for it is God's great power to save. When humans can defeat Satan without the truth, then they will no longer need the truth. They cannot. No one is strong enough to conquer the Evil One without an "it is written" (Matt. 4:1-11).

Never! The soul of man needs food. If man could invent a substitute for "soul food," he would not need the gospel, but he has not. Peter stated that the soul feeds on the "sincere milk of the word" (I Pet. 2:2), and Paul wrote that he could progress to eat "strong meat" from the hand of God (Heb. 5:12-14). The gospel fills those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6).

Never! Man still needs a map to heaven. Men try to invent a roadway to heaven, but these maps will only get one lost. If

we follow the road of “faith only” or the lane of “direct operation of the Holy Spirit” or the path of “once saved always saved,” we are traveling a broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Only Christ and his gospel can lead one to heaven (John 14:6). “I must needs go home by the way of the cross; there’s no other way but this.”

Jesus plainly stated the conditions by which men can reach much needed salvation. A sinner must believe in Christ (Mark 16:16), decide to change his sinful life (repent) (Luke 13:5), confess the sweet name of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). We can choose to heed these scriptures or harass them, to read them or reject them, to respect them or ridicule them. Still, the same ancient gospel is the cure for all the spiritual ills of men! Why not obey today?

The Blood of Christ (Outline)

*By Victor M. Eskew
Vol. 111, No. 03*

I. Introduction.

A. Jesus shed blood at Gethsemane, in the halls of Pilate, and at Calvary.

B. Christians remember his blood each Lord's Day.

C. Peter called it “precious” blood (1 Pet. 1:19).

*1. The word *precious* means “dear, valuable, costly.”*

2. *The blood of Jesus is invaluable.*

II. The Precious Blood of the Lamb.

A. *The blood was real.*

1. *While on earth, Jesus had a human body of flesh, blood, and bones (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Luke 24:39).*

2. *Jesus' blood, like ours, was composed of red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma. It was real blood.*

B. *The blood was royal.*

1. *He was of the house and lineage of David, whose dynasty continues to the end of time (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32-33).*

2. *His kingship was mocked during his crucifixion (Mark 15:16-20).*

3. *Jesus was raised from the dead to sit on his eternal throne (Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 2:32-36).*

4. *Jesus is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15).*

C. *The blood was innocent.*

1. *Jesus did nothing wrong (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).*

a. Judas said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4).

b. The wife of Pilate said, "Have nothing to do with this just man" (Matt. 27:19).

c. Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).

d. Pilate also said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (Matt. 27:24).

2. The people who knew Jesus best could not convict him of sin (John 8:46).

3. If the enemies of Jesus could not convict him of sin, who can?

D. The blood was substitutionary.

1. Jesus gave himself for us (Titus 2:14).

2. Jesus "bare our sins in his own body" (1 Pet. 2:24).

3. Jesus "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

4. Jesus' stripes heal us (Isa. 53:5).

E. The blood is satisfying.

1. God is holy (holiness is a general term for moral excellence).

a. "The Lord our God is holy" (Psa. 99:9).

b. "Holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9).

c. His pure eyes cannot behold evil (Hab. 1:13).

d. Men fear God because he is holy (Rev. 15:4).

2. The holiness of God demands that sin be punished.

a. God is just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

b. God cannot tolerate evil.

c. God must judge and condemn sin.

d. God can justify sin only by the merit of a substitutionary sacrifice.

e. God can only be just if he forgives by a blood sacrifice, because “the blood of it is for the life thereof” (Lev. 17:14).

3. Jesus’ blood satisfied the demands of divine justice.

a. Jesus was made a sin-sacrifice for us, though he knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

b. Jesus became an “offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour” (Eph. 5:2).

F. The blood of Jesus was effective.

1. It cleanses from sin (Matt. 26:28; 1 John 1:7).

2. It redeems from sin (Eph. 1:7).

3. It gives life to the dead (Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 5:11).

4. It purchased the church (Acts. 20:28).

5. It was shed once, never to be shed again (Heb. 10:11-12).

III. Conclusion.

A. *The blood of Jesus is precious.*

B. *His blood is real, royal, innocent, substitutionary, satisfying, and effective.*

C. *We remember his blood each Lord's Day.*

A Habitation of God Through the Spirit

By Earl Trimble

Vol. 106, No. 06

Ephesians 2:22 is sometimes cited to support the view that the Holy Spirit personally indwells the Christian in a direct and in-Person manner. Often the question will be asked: "How can God dwell in us through the Spirit if the Spirit does not indwell us?" The phrase, "through the Spirit," in this Ephesians verse, is thought by some to mean that God, being in the Spirit, indwells us indirectly, figuratively, or representatively through (by means of) the Holy Spirit who is literally in us in his own Person.

Does this verse in the Ephesian letter, in fact, teach that

the Spirit indwells one literally and immediately, as some affirm? This phrase, "through the Spirit," occurs at least four times in the New Testament (Acts 21:4; Rom. 8:13; Eph. 2:22; 1 Peter 1:22, KJV). An examination of the other three references will show that this phrase, through the Spirit does not refer to an indwelling of the Spirit. Notice the similar usages of these four references:

- 1) "...who said to Paul through the Spirit..." (Acts 21:4)
- 2) "...through the Spirit do mortify the deeds..." (Rom. 8:13)
- 3) "...a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22)
- 4) "...obeying the truth through the Spirit..." (1 Peter 1:22)

Notice the similar meanings of this phrase, "through the Spirit" in these four references:

"And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). The Holy Spirit made known to the disciples at Tyre that Paul would be in danger of his life if he returned to Jerusalem (see also Acts 21:10-14). Here "through the Spirit" means "by the Spirit" (ASV). That is, the Spirit had warned the brethren of the danger that awaited Paul at Jerusalem. This information given the disciples by the Spirit was inspired revelation.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). Who would argue this means if those Roman Christians would mortify the deeds of the body "through the Spirit" that indwelt them, they would live? It is apparent Paul was telling them if they would mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit's teaching, that is, according to what the Spirit taught, they would live.

"In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God

through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). How are Christians built together for a habitation of God? Is our being built together accomplished by the Spirit as he literally indwells us? If so, then would our being built together not be a direct operation of the Holy Spirit? Again, in this Ephesians 2:22 reference, the phrase "through the Spirit" could have been rendered "by the Spirit." Our obedience to the Spirit's teaching builds together as "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). This verse does not allude to a direct, personal, immediate indwelling of the Spirit. It is a misapplication of Ephesians 2:22 to use it to teach that the Spirit indwells us literally in his own Person.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Who would affirm that one's "obeying the truth" is effected "through the Spirit" that literally indwells him? We know that one obeys the truth through, or by, the Spirit's influence exerted through, or by, the inspired Word of God. The Spirit's only influence upon the human heart or conscience is through the message of the inspired Word of God, and never by direct operation. In like manner we are built together for a habitation of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit through the influence exerted by the Spirit in the inspired Word of life (John 6:63-68).

What About the Rapture?

by Joe E. Galloway

Vol. 106, No. 6, 7, and 8

The rapture is a widely accepted denominational doctrine. Popular TV and radio evangelists teach this idea. Several

best-selling religious books deal with this subject. Hal Lindsey's book, The Late Great Planet Earth, became a Hollywood movie. This book, first printed in 1970, was so popular that by 1976 it had gone through forty-two printings!

The result of this blitz of teaching is alarming. The news media mentioned the War in the Persian Gulf as maybe connected with Armageddon. Many people are using the term "the rapture" as if it was a commonly known and established future event, but the word "rapture" is not in any credible translation of the Bible.

The denominational idea of a coming rapture confuses folk and makes it difficult for them to understand and accept the truth. It is necessary to combat this false teaching before we can begin successfully to teach basic Bible truth. Some members of the church have accepted the teaching as Biblical. Brethren, we must teach the truth on "end times" and answer this false doctrine.

This incorrect view of "the rapture" says that Christ will soon appear and take the saved away from the earth for a seven-year rapture, leaving the unsaved on the earth to suffer. Most of us have read articles or heard hair-raising stories on what these people say will occur when Christ raptures the saved.

The anecdotes tell of men waking up and finding their wives and children mysteriously gone. Others, at work, abruptly disappear from their machines and desks. Drivers and pilots suddenly vanish, causing crippling crashes.

Those not raptured panic, not knowing what has happened. The phone lines are jammed as people call the police, the newspaper office, the radio station. Disorder is rampant. Finally, some slowly realize the "rapture" has taken place, and they, not ready, were left behind. Meanwhile, the saved have inexpressible bliss.

TOO NEW TO BE BIBLICAL

Few people seem to know this unbiblical teaching is somewhat new. Although the false doctrine of premillennialism has been around for a while, dispensational premillennialism (from which comes the rapture idea) is dated from about 1830, beginning with John N. Darby and the start of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

One writer claims the two-stage idea of Christ's coming commenced with Miss Margaret MacDonald in Port Glasgow, Scotland a few years earlier. No one can trace it back before the 1800's. This shows the doctrine to be unscriptural. It started 1700 years too late to be from God!

THE DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIAL THEORY EXPLAINED

Dispensationalists, generally, teach that all human history falls into seven divisions. They disagree on the designations and the exact periods covered in the first five dispensations, but all agree we are now living in the sixth period, called, by them, the Dispensation of Grace. They expect the seventh dispensation to last one thousand years and call it, The Millennium.

Most say the Dispensation of Grace will soon end with the reputed rapture. The living righteous will be caught up to meet Christ in the air to be judged and rewarded. The rapture lasts seven years (the "final week" of Daniel's prophesy – Daniel 9:27)

On earth, during this seven-year period, is The Great

Tribulation. During the first part of this period, the Jews in Palestine make a covenant with Antichrist. They rebuild the temple, renew its sacrifices, and convert many to Judaism.

In the middle of this seven-year period the Antichrist breaks covenant with the Jews and demands to be worshiped. Multitudes are slaughtered in a great persecution.

After seven years, Christ comes back to earth with the raptured saints. Dispensational premillennialists call this The Revelation. The battle of Armageddon is fought and the Antichrist is destroyed in the war.

The righteous dead are, at last, remembered and resurrected. All the nations are judged. The millennium begins. Christ rules the world from earthly Jerusalem, sitting on David's literal throne. After the thousand years, Satan is loosed for a little while. After Satan's last fling, the wicked dead are resurrected and judged in "The Great White Throne Judgment."

A PROOF TEXT

Teachers of dispensational premillennialism claim First Thessalonians teaches their speculation about a rapture and tribulation and millennial reign of Jesus on earth. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

The verse does mention the living saved, along with the resurrected saved, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, however the passage speaks of what occurs after all the dead are raised and judged and says nothing of a secret rapture. The passage also indicates the redeemed in Hades are resurrected and the saved on earth are transformed simultaneously.

The book of First Thessalonians does not teach a clandestine

return and rapture but says, “he (Jesus) shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16). This is one of the noisiest verses in the Bible! The verse says, “the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

Verse 17 says the saved of earth shall, with the sainted dead, be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” The word “so,” most people know, is an adverb of manner, and means “in this manner,” that is, “in the air,” shall we ever be with the Lord.

The rapture notion teaches, instead, that only the living righteous will be caught up in the air to be with Christ for seven years. Then they are to return to earth with him in The Revelation.

The advocates of a covert coming of Christ and the rapture say the Bible pictures the final coming Jesus as like a thief. So, they think, he will sneak in and snatch the saved from the earth secretly, like a thief doing his work.

The Bible does not teach the act of Christ’s coming to be as a thief, but says “the day” comes like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2). This does not teach that Christ will be sneaking in and out but shows we cannot know when Christ is coming.

CONTRARY TO BIBLICAL TEACHING

Many things in this fanciful doctrine contradict Bible truth! The word “rapture” is not Biblical. Hal Lindsey says it is not in the Bible and tells us not to look for It (The Late Great Planet Earth, page 126). Consider some discrepancies of this doctrine with God’s revealed truth.

First Discrepancy

The idea that the saved are to be taken from the world, while the lost remain, violates Bible teaching. The parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30; Matt. 13:38-43) disproves this notion. The wheat and the tares grow together “until the harvest” (13:30). Jesus tells us “the good seed are the children of the kingdom” and “the tares are the children of the wicked one” (13:38). “The harvest is the end of the world” (13:39). The sacred scriptures say the good and the bad will “grow together” until the “end of the world.” In the final harvest the householder will command, “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in the bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (verse 30). Jesus’ interpretation of the parable says, “The Son of man shall send forth his angles, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun” (verses 41-43). The impress of the passage is a simultaneous judgment of the saved and the lost. The parable says the lost are to be cast into the fires of hell at the same time the saved go to their heavenly mansions.

Second Discrepancy

Dispensational millenarians teach separate resurrections of the good and evil. According to them, the transformed righteous of earth are swept away to a seven-year ecstasy. After the seven years, the sainted dead are resurrected to take part in a victorious 1,000 year earthly kingdom. After this, the wicked are resurrected. This makes different resurrections separated by at least 1,000 years.

Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

Some try to dodge the force of this by saying that "all" simply refers to the saved. Jesus takes care of this quibble—"they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." The ransomed and the dammed are raised the same hour.

Third Discrepancy

The rapture theory demands a secret coming of Christ. In discussing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus told his disciples not to believe it if some said, "Lo, here is Christ, or there" (Matt. 24:23-26). Jesus explained, "For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27).

Just as all see the flash of lightening, so Christ's ultimate coming will be open and public. It will not be an event so secret that most of mankind will not even realize Christ has returned until many hours afterward. Acts 1:11 tells us, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." When he comes again, "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7).

Fourth Discrepancy

The rapture speculation of millennial dispensationalists demands two future, literal returns of Christ. They call one return "the rapture" and the other return "the revelation." Jesus promised, "I will come again" (John 14:3). He did not say, "I will come again and again." Hebrews 9:28 tells us that "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." A third literal coming of Jesus is not promised in the holy scripture.

Dispensationalists downplay what the Bible says about a second literal coming by calling it the first and second “phase” of his second coming. This does not remove the fact they teach he is coming two more times, with seven years between his second and third coming. The Bible teaches one, still future, literal coming of Christ!

Fifth Discrepancy

A seven-year period of great tribulation on earth triggered by the second, literal coming of Jesus is not in the Bible. Matthew 24:21 mentions “great tribulation” at the destruction of Jerusalem – not after this age and the destruction of the earth.

The great tribulation of Matthew 24 cannot refer to Jesus’ last coming. The passage tells his followers not to return to their houses for possessions and speaks of the difficulty of being pregnant or nursing a baby and of the inconvenience of fleeing during the winter or on the Sabbath, all of which is meaningless, unless he is speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction, and not of his second, final coming. If Jesus is coming again to steal, like a thief, the good folk from the earth, it is pointless to tell them not to pack their clothes nor urge them to pray nor to have babies, nor that it is winter, nor the Sabbath day when he comes to zing them into rhapsody.

Revelation 7:14 speaks of victorious saints who suffered “great tribulation” on earth, who are rewarded by the Lord in heaven. There is no passage in all the Bible that speaks of a great tribulation after the Christian age. The Bible speaks instead of great comfort for the redeemed at the end of this period.

Sixth Discrepancy

The antichrist concept of millennialism is foreign to the

scriptures. Antichrist simply means a person who is against Christ. The term is never used in the Bible to designate a leader of the forces of evil at the end of time.

1 John 2:18 helps answer this false emphasis. John said, “even now are many antichrists.” The antichrists of John’s day disprove the claim that one antichrist will appear after this age.

A list of those identified as the antichrist is amusing – Napoleon, Wilhelm, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Henry Kissinger, and Ronald Reagan. Soon someone will add Suddam Hussein to the roll. The prophets for dispensationalism are obviously wide of the mark, but that does not seem to bother their followers. They commonly ignore Deuteronomy 18:22! The prophets of the rapture, who teach lies, are the tail (Isa. 9:15)

Seventh Discrepancy

The battle of Armageddon, according to dispensational millennialists, is a war between the forces of the antichrist and those of Jesus at his literal, second coming. Revelation 16:14 mentions a “battle” and Revelation 16:16 mentions a place called “Armageddon.” Neither the antichrist nor Christ’s last coming is mentioned in this passage.

Pre-millennialists say prophetic statements should be accepted in an unqualified sense. The battle of Armageddon is therefore a verbatim, carnal warfare. Some claim the carnage will be so great blood will really flow to the depth of the horse’s bits – horses will be swimming in human blood.

Will they accept as literal “three unclean spirits like frogs” coming “out of the mouth of the dragon” to gather the kings to battle? The war of Revelation 16 is no more literal than is the instigator a literal frog who comes out of the mouth of a literal dragon.

Eighth Discrepancy

Advocates of the rapture say the earthly phase of the kingdom of heaven is to begin when Christ comes a second time unto salvation. The bible says the earthly phase of the kingdom of God now exists and will end when Jesus appears a final time.

The kingdom of heaven, which John the Baptist said was at hand, began on the Pentecost of Acts 2, during the Roman empire as foretold in Daniel 2:44. First century saints were in it (Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28). At Jesus' last coming he will deliver an already established kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:23-25).

Ninth Discrepancy

Dispensationalists list as many as seven separate days of judgment. All such false teachers list at least three days of judgment – one at the claimed rapture of the saints, another for the nations after the assumed seven-year tribulation, and a third at the end of the so-called millennium.

The Bible teaches one day of judgment. Near the end of the gospel of Matthew we read of the day of judgment at least four times (Matt. 10:15; Matt. 11:22-24; Matt. 12:36), and “judgment” (singular) at least two more times (Matt. 12:41-42). “He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world” (Acts 17:31). The idea of various days of judgment for various groups of people is alien to the Bible.

“As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:27-28).

Working the Works of God

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

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The Bible teaches that works have nothing to do with salvation, and it teaches that works are necessary to salvation.

Still, the Bible does not contradict itself.

How can this be? How can the Bible say two things that seem to be diametrically opposed and yet not contradict itself? It would appear to be self-evident that works cannot be both necessary and unnecessary to salvation.

Since the Bible is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), it must be true and therefore cannot contradict itself. Truth, in order to be truth, must be coherent. If two statements contradict, either one or both of them must be false, but there is no way they can both be true. How, then, do we deal with the fact that the Bible says works are not necessary to justification, and also says that we are justified by works?

Some assume a “take your pick” attitude and go blithely down the path not knowing how to reconcile the two statements – and, possibly, not caring. The honest person however cannot do this and must either reject the Bible or find a logical way to harmonize the two statements.

Various Works

To understand the Bible we must define its terms correctly. It is necessary to understand accurately how Bible writers use the word “works” (sometimes “deeds”), or we will be confused.

A survey of how the Bible uses this word will help us to avoid the confusion of misunderstanding. A failure to understand something correctly leads to incomprehension and perhaps unbelief.

Following is a partial list of “work(s)” mentioned in the Old and New Testaments:

- The work God does – Gen. 2:2; Judges 2:7; Ps. 71:17; 1 Cor. 12:6; John 6:28-29; John 10:37; John 14:10
- The work man does in providing food and shelter – Gen. 3:17-19; Exod. 23:12; Exod. 26:1; Eccl. 2:4; Matt. 21:28
- The work man does in obeying specific commands of God – Gen. 6:13-22; John 9:4; 1 Cor. 15:58
- Work of iniquity (evil) – Ps. 6:8; Ps. 14:1; Jer. 1:16; Ezek. 33:26; Matt. 7:23; Luke 13:27; John 3:19; Rom. 1:27; Eph. 4:19; Rom. 13:12 (“works of darkness”); Gal. 5:19-21 (“works of the flesh”)
- Work of righteousness (good) – Ps. 15:2; Acts 10:35; Matt. 5:16; Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 3:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; James 1:4; James 3:13
- Works that are worthy of repentance – Acts 26:20
- The mighty works (signs, miracles) of Jesus – Matt. 11:23-24; John 10:32; Acts 2:22
- Works of the Law of Moses – Rom. 3:20; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:2
- Greater works done by Jesus’ disciples – John 5:20; John 14:12
- Good and bad works by which all men shall be judged – Rom. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12
- Human works apart from works of God – Rom. 9:11; Rom. 11:6
- Converts to Jesus – 1 Cor. 3:14
- Apostolic signs, and wonders, and mighty works – 2 Cor. 12:12
- Work of sinless perfection – Eph. 2:9; Col. 2:21-23
- The power that works in the saved – Eph. 3:20; Eph. 4:12

- The word of God that works in the believer – 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 1:11; 1 Tim. 2:10; 1 Tim. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:21
- Works that justify – James 2:24; James 3:13
- Works of the devil – 1 John 3:8
- The ungodly works of ungodliness – Jude 1:15

This gives a sample of various “works” mentioned in the Bible. It is a mistake to suppose that the word work(s) always refers to condition of acceptance with God. It does not!

Even a casual glance at this list will convince the thoughtful Bible student this is a complicated subject, having many interrelated parts. It is difficult to deal with because of the need to take different relationships or points of view into consideration.

The mighty acts of Jehovah are works. Creation (Ps. 8:3-6; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 33:4; Ps. 92:5; Ps. 102:25; Ps. 104:24), redemptive acts in history like the Exodus (Judges 2:7-10).

Jesus is our perfect example in all things (1 Pet. 2:21). The Savior went about doing good (Acts 10:38-39; John 4:34; John 5:36; John 10:25-38; John 15:24; John 17:4). His words and his works confirmed his authority and mission.

Humans are sinless at birth, seeing that Jehovah is the Father and Giver of the human spirit (Heb. 12:9; Eccl. 12:7). As the child matures it comes to understand that some things are right and other things are wrong, but chooses to do wrong things and ignore right things. This is called sin – sin of omission and sin of commission. This is the something a person knowingly does to himself. Iniquity separates a soul from its God (Isa. 59:2). Those who die in sin cannot go where Jesus is; they “shall not inherit the kingdom of God (John 8:21; Gal. 5:19-21).

In his infinite compassion Jehovah sent Jesus to offer himself sacrifice for sins (John 3:16; John 10:18; Matt. 26:28).

We access the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb of God through belief (John 8:24).

"They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:28-29).

Saving belief is a work that includes other works. Faith is shown by works (James 2:18). "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). Abraham was justified by works produced by faith (James 2:21-22). Works make faith perfect (James 2:22). Sinners are justified by works and not by faith only (James 2:24). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Jesus said, "He that believeth (a work) and is baptized (a work) shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (James 2:22). In baptism the sinner, "is buried with Christ" and is "raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). In baptism we are buried "with" Christ and we are raised "with" him believing that God will keep his promise to save "he that believeth and is baptized." Peter tells us that baptism saves (1 Pet. 3:21). In baptism our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

The spirit that is born again in the water of baptism (John 3:5) enters the kingdom of God, where faith continues to work, bringing glory to God (Matt. 5:16). The saved "work the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 16:10), abound "in every good work" (1 Cor. 9:8). Servants of righteousness "end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:5). The child of God is "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10); the saint is "fruitful unto every good work" (Col. 1:10). The Christian "works out his own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Paul prayed that God the Father may "comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word" (2 Thess. 2:17). Women professing godliness are to adorn

themselves “with good works” (1 Tim. 2:10). If a man desires the office of bishop, he desires “a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). Widows to be enrolled are to be “well reported of for good works” (1 Tim. 5:10). The new covenant lauds the good works of some that are “evident, and cannot be hid” (1 Tim. 5:25). Those described as “a vessel unto honor” are “prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). “The man of God” is “furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17). Preachers are to be “an ensample of good works” (Titus 2:7), “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Followers of Jesus are to “be ready unto every good work” (Titus 3:1). Paul desired “that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:8). “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister” (Heb. 6:10). “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (Heb. 10:24). Our Lord Jesus “make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:21).

The “wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13). Behave seemly among the pagans, “that, wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12). “My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). Jesus knows and commends the works of his disciples on earth (Rev. 2:2, Rev. 2:9, Rev. 2:19; Rev. 3:8). Those who die in the Lord are blessed because “their works follow with them” (Rev. 14:13).

On the last great judgment day, God will render unto every man “according to their works, whether they be good or evil” (Eccl. 12:14; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12).

It is because of a present and future judgment that we must

avoid the works of the flesh ... the works of darkness ... the works of the devil. Abstaining from all evil works is critical to the believer.

In the light of what the new covenant has to say about the importance of good works – works of faith – works that justify (James 2:24) – it seems strange that anyone would say that works have nothing to do with salvation ... unless, of course, he is blinded by denominational dogma.

The Bible does warn us that we cannot live to maturity and be sinless (Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:2-6). “All sin and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). It also tells us the works of the Law of Moses cannot save us (Rom. 9:32; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:10). If eternal salvation could come by the Mosaic Law, then the death of Jesus was needless, because the people had that law for 1,500 years before Jesus was born of a woman (Gal. 2:21). We are also told that we cannot save ourselves by austerities (Col. 2:18).

Some honest person may be misled into wrongly supposing that when the Bible tells us we cannot be saved by our own works because it is not possible for us to live without sin – sooner or later all will sin and fall short of God’s glory, that it is saying that even works of faith and righteousness – works of God – do not save. Also some will read Bible passages which say that the works of the Law of Moses cannot save, and mistakenly conclude that works have nothing to do with salvation. This study should clear that up because it gives indisputable proof that there is no justification without works.

It is indisputably true that works are necessary to justification (James 2:24), but it is also true that some works cannot save – the work of living a perfectly sinless life – the work of devising our own scheme of redemption – the works of the Law of Moses – the works of darkness, which are the works of Satan.

So, it is true that works both save us and have nothing to do with our salvation, depending on what kind of works you are talking about.

It is not possible for a reasonable adult to be sinless and therefore, in this sense, one cannot save himself by his own works. We cannot be saved by the works of Satan, nor by the works of the Law of Moses, nor by any human invention. Such works have no power to save and many of them are an offense to God.

Still, it is true that the work of faith (the works produced by faith, see Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26), bring the sinner into a right relationship with his Creator, help to maintain that relationship, and will one day be the reason for his promotion to glory (Matt. 25:31-46). To say that works have nothing to do with salvation is to fly in the face of Bible teaching.

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Anti-Christ (antichrist)

*By A. B. Gregoreo
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No other term in the Bible stirs the imagination and fires such wild speculation as that of "antichrist." The speculation is extreme among those religious teachers holding the various premillennial theories. It is the stuff of scary movies and novels that attract multitudes of superstitious worldlings. In their ignorance, authors weave a web of error. God's word provides the light that will help us understand the who and what of "antichrist."

The term is a combination of “anti’ and Christ. “Anti” has two basic meanings: (1) “over against,” hence one who puts himself in the place of Christ; (2). “opposition to,” i.e., one who stands in opposition to Christ.

From first to last, the story of the Bible is that of Satan’s attempts to take the place of God, and his opposition to the Creator’s rule and will. This was first displayed in heaven in the misty past when certain angels, not content with their position, sinned and were cast down to hell (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Satan then appeared in Eden to corrupt the only creatures made in God’s image (Gen. 3:1-6).

In Noah’s day he nearly succeeded in snaring all of humanity in his vile net (Gen. 6:9-12). In Egypt, Satan’s man enslaved the Hebrews and slaughtered their male children. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, crushed God’s people and demanded that they worship his image (Dan. 3:1-5).

The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to foresee Satanic efforts to hinder and even destroy God’s cause. From the broken Grecian Empire he saw a “little- horn that rose up to persecute God’s people (Dan. 8:9-14; 23-25). This represented the Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes (176-164). He hated the Jews and their religion. Their temple he robbed. He placed an image of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. A swine was sacrificed on the sacred altar and the temple defiled with its blood. He forbade circumcision. Every copy of the Hebrew Scriptures that could be found was destroyed. He tore down the walls of Jerusalem. Truly he was anti-God.

Daniel also saw yet another little horn that persecuted God’s people. It sprang from the Roman Empire and most likely represented the vicious emperor Domition (Dan. 7:23-26). From Nero onward most of the Roman emperors were antichrist.

Jesus was confronted by antichrist forces of evil. At his birth, wicked Herod the Great sought to have him murdered.

When his ministry was launched, the Jewish hierarchy waged an ongoing war against him and his teaching. Ultimately they secured his death. The Master warned his disciples of imposters who would claim to be Christ, i.e. messiah (Matt. 24:5). With deceitful signs they would lead many astray, even among the elect (Matt. 24:24).

Paul warned of a coming “man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:1-12) – described as the “son of perdition.” He would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or worshiped. He would sit in the temple of God and set forth himself as God. His coming would surely be a work of Satan. He would use lying signs and wonders to deceive people. This malevolent spirit of anti-Christian iniquity was already at work in Paul’s day.

The apostle John wrote of “antichrists,” not just one single evil individual. In his day there were already many antichrists. They formerly had been among the faithful churches but they have gone out from them because they were no longer with them in heart and mind (1 John 2:18-19). They were liars because they denied that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22). They denied his Sonship to God. They were false prophets. In their teaching they denied Jesus had come in the flesh, i.e., his incarnation. They were actively at work in John’s day and he warned the brethren to reject and avoid them. They were deceivers (2 John 7). Because they did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, they had not God (2 John 9). There is an attitude or spirit held by certain false teachers then and now which John labels “anti-Christian” (1 John 4:1-3).

Antichrists are of two varieties. There are those yet within the church. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, “From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). He likewise warned Timothy that “some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Such antichrists seek to corrupt the faith and

practice of the church. They seek power and control over congregations.

Some create their own churches that compete with Christ's church for the souls of men. These are counterfeit churches that do great damage to Christianity. We see popes who put themselves in the place of Christ, claiming to be the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Of similar nature are the founders and heads of denominations. Founders and leaders of all the cults that pervert the message of the Master seek to situate their "church" in the place of Christ's sacred body as antichrist. Most prominent in this class of antichrists are those theologians and "pastors" who have embraced one of the many varieties of religious skepticism. Claiming to be Christians, they deny Jesus existed from eternity, that he is God, that he was virgin born, that he worked genuine miracles, that his death secured for- give of humanity's sins, and that he arose and ascended back to heaven. Occupying positions in seminaries and churches, these unbelievers are against Christ and his holy Cause.

Then there are those antichrists who in no way are associated with Christianity. They are unbelievers of every stripe who hate Jesus, his church, his word, and his disciples. Their hatred drives them to make war against the saints (Rev. 12:13-17). This warfare can be violent, physical persecution such as Rome and Jews employed in the early years. Modern examples of this violent anti-Christian spirit are seen in Russia under Communism, China, Cuba and most Muslim nations.

The opposition of unbelieving anti-Christians can be ideological such as presently prevails in academia, the media and the entertainment industry. They ignore the existence of Christianity, or they marginalize Christians. They subject them to ridicule and continual assaults on their faith. This opposition can take the form of legal harassment. Anti-Christian organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for the Separation of Church and

State use every legal trick to hinder, hobble, and undermine the influence of Christianity in America.

Imagining antichrist to be some horrid supernatural enemy who is to come at the end of our age, many are ignorant, blind, and unaware of the antichrists working in their very midst!

Paul describes the end of all such anti-Christian enemies, "Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8). In the day when the Christ returns, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God " (Phil. 2:10-11). This will certainly include every person who has set himself in the place of Christ or worked against his cause!

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