



# UNMASKING SOPHISTRY

**A Journal of Christian Evidences and Comparative Religions**

**"See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with the elementary principles of the world, rather than in accordance with Christ."**

**(Colossians 2:8, NASB)**

**October - December, 2021 | VOLUME 1 | NO. 3**

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# From The Editor's Desk

You are welcome to the third edition of Unmasking Sophistry Magazine. This journal is designed to teach the truth of God's word as well as expose the various arguments that have been prepared in defense of false religion and arguments designed to oppose the Christian faith. In order to cover a wide range of areas, various sections have been created in this journal and topics relating to each of the sections will be discussed at every edition in a consistent manner.

In the erstwhile edition of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections such as: *The Whole Duty of Man; Why Believe in Jesus Christ?; Is there an Afterlife?; Suppose I was Born a Muslim; Is Christianity A Religion or a Way of Life? (Part 2); A Discourse on the Role of Women in the Church; The Rise of Catholicism; The Troubler of Israel; Alcoholic Drinking; When Parents Fail; Does John 6:53-54 refer to the Lord's Supper?; Has God Predestined the Plan or the Man?; Scriptural Answers to Popular Objections From Gospel Prospects;* and a few other interesting topics. We appreciate all the feedbacks received from our dear readers.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *The Whole Duty of Man (Part 2); Bible Versus Other Religious Books; Unity in Diversity – What Is Wrong?; A Discourse on Infant Baptism; The Protestant Reformation; Speaking in Tongues; Who Are The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4?; When Parents Fail; Limited Atonement; Evangelism; Why Not Take The Lord's Supper At Night?;* and other intriguing topics.

You are warmly reminded that Unmasking Sophistry is available online and all editions (past and present) can be accessed and downloaded online at [www.unmaskingsophistry.com](http://www.unmaskingsophistry.com)

The open door policy of the magazine is still very much intact – if anyone disagrees with an article in any edition of the magazine, such could write a rebuttal to it and we would be willing to publish it in the same issue to which the article he is replying appeared. Alternatively, a proposition will be set for the writer of the article and whoever dissents to affirm and deny respectively as the case may be – with the aim of knowing the truth on the subject matter.

Once again, all the prayers, feedbacks and encouragements from readers are duly appreciated. We would continue to hold fast the pattern of sound words which we have heard from the apostles, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 1:13; Acts 2:42).

God's Love and Blessings!

**Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba**  
**Editor**

# CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

## The Whole Duty of Man (Part 2)

By Rowland Femi Gbamis | Ontario, Canada

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

### What Is The Fear Of God?

The fear of God is to demonstrate a feeling of awe, reverence and acknowledgment of the Supreme Being (Cf. Acts 17:26-28). The author of Hebrews pens a strong note, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28-29). To the Children of God, the fear of God does not connote a negative sense. Instead, a proper understanding of God should direct our paths in fear of the Creator to lead to greater faith, trust, and obedience (Cf. Heb. 5: 8-9). In Exodus, when the Israelites saw the wondrous work of salvation that God did at the Red Sea, the Bible says, "they feared the Lord and put their trust in Him" (Exo. 14:31). Thus, the fear of God is the disposition that extends from utter terror to veneration and glory of the Almighty. To fear God is to obey His commands. Jesus says, "if you love me, keep my commandments...You are my friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 14:15; 15:14).

Consequently, a scriptural understanding of the fear of God should lead us in the path of reverential fear toward sins as God's Children. We must hate sin for what it is – it can and will destroy the souls of men! (Psalm 97:10; Prov. 16: 6). Likewise, for those who are not Christians, the fear of God is the dread of his judgment and eternal separation from the presence of God (2 Thess. 1:9). While teaching in Luke chapter 12 on the fear of God, Jesus says, "And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body,

and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:4-5). In addition, the author of Hebrews corroborates this fact, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

### The Impacts Of God's Fear

The Impact of God's fear should ordinarily bring about obedience in our lives. When God told Noah to build an ark, the Bible says, "Thus Noah did according to all that God commanded him (Gen. 6:22; 7:5). Hence, by inspiration, the author of Hebrews notes: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Heb. 11:7). In other words, obedience should cause us, among many further instructions in the Bible, to do the following:

#### A. The Preacher and His Ministry

*"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Tim. 4:1-5).*



It takes the fear of God for an evangelist to see the imperatives in the above injunction from Paul the Apostle. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul says, "knowing the terror of God we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5: 11). To what extent are preachers persuading men today? Are we preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)? Or do we seek to please men (Gal. 1:10)? Paul would later tell the Galatians, "Am I, therefore, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Therefore, it takes the fear of God for Preachers to "speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 2:1). A preacher, in fear of God, must "study to show himself approve unto God.." (2 Tim. 2: 15), he must "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4:16). Said differently, the message that springs forth from the mouth of a preacher should be healthy and not adulterated teachings that damn the soul!

### **B. The Elders and the Shepherding of Souls**

Men saddled with the responsibility of caring and watching over men's souls must be those who have a fear of God in their lives. The following qualifications about elders reveal the seriousness of this matter:

*"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the Church of God? not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he falls into reproach and the snare of the devil." (1 Tim. 3:1-7).*

Said differently, it takes men with the fear of God to guide and guard the Church by godly wisdom, not through worldly or manipulative wisdom. God expects elders to be men who are vast in the scripture (1 Tim. 3:2). The shepherds must be competent in teaching to feed the flock properly. By doing that, they will keep the congregation from evil by watching for wolves from without and protecting it against tragedy from within (Acts 20: 30-31). The ability to handle God's word correctly is vital because scriptural eldership must respect biblical authority. These godly men must be willing to take on the responsibility of caring for the souls of the congregation (1 Pet. 5:2-3; Heb. 13:7,17) and be ready to give an account to God for their stewardship (Tit. 1:7).

### **C. The fear of God in the lives of the members**

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves." (1 Thess.5:12-13). Apostle Paul enjoins on the brethren at Thessalonica the willingness to submit to their leaders as a duty. Hence, the need for fear of God, otherwise, one might think the above instruction is a light command. To reiterate the importance of this message, the author of Hebrews writes, "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17). In other words, Christians must show respect to their leaders, obey and submit to their authority in fear of the Lord. Let us gladly follow the guidance of the leadership as they lead us in the right part of the Lord because a Christian's life both within the Church and outside should be a life of submission.

## Conclusion

The Bible says, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." (Eccl. 12:10). As we draw the curtain for this lesson, let us remember that fear serves to keep us obedient to the things of God. To the Corinthians, Paul would say, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Corinthians 7:1). It is the fear of God that keeps God's children in check to abhor sinning. Thus, since "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14), would you rather not fear God and do his will? Remember, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the almighty God (Hebrews 10:31). Let us continue to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), even as we remember the word of the Lord: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Final thought, if you are reading this message, and you have not submitted yourself to God, you need to fear Him and keep his commandment by surrendering your life to God through the following processes:

- A. Hear the gospel, for faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31).
- B. Believe in the deity of Jesus Christ (John 8:24; John 3:18).
- C. Repent of sins (Romans 3:23;6:23; Luke 13:5; Acts 17:30)
- D. Confess faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:36-38).
- E. Be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 2 Cor.

5:17; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21).

F. Continue in the faith by living for the Lord; otherwise, your salvation can be lost (Matt. 24:13; Heb. 10:36-39; Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 2:20-22).

## Go Not To The Temple

Go not to the temple to put flowers  
Upon the feet of God  
First fill your own house  
With the Fragrance of love and kindness

Go not to the temple to light candles  
Before the altar of God,  
First remove the darkness of sin  
Pride and ego from your heart

Go not to the temple to bow down your head in  
prayer,  
First learn to bow in humility  
Before your fellow men

Go not to the temple to pray on bended knees  
First bend down to lift someone who is down-trodden  
And strengthen the young ones, not crush them

Go not to the temple to ask for forgiveness for your  
sins  
First forgive from your heart those who have hurt you.

~ Rabindranath Tagore (Nobel Prize in Literature, 1913)

# Christian Evidences

## Bible Versus Other Religious Books

By Kolawole Ajibola, Ph.D | Osun, Nigeria

Taking a cursory look on the prophecy of the Bible, one will come to the conclusion that "There is no other book of religious antiquity which provides so many explicit prophecies: so distant in the future and which came to pass as if it was a script acted."

### Introduction

There are several books in the world today under different classifications such as philosophy, psychology, medicine, sciences, technology, religious, and others. Under the religious classification, we have so many books, but all of them and those that will still join the library can be safely divided into two: The Bible and other religious books.

The burden of this write-up is not about all books in the world, neither is it on the religious books but on what makes the Bible different from all other religious books. The following among other reasons are presented to you for consideration what makes the Bible unique. In this write-up, the uniqueness of the Bible was considered vis-a-viz its continuity, translation and circulation, survival, teaching, influence and others.

### I. The Bible Is Unique In Its Continuity

Among several books that have ever been written, here is the only book that was written over a long period of time (about 1,600 years, covering a span of 40 generations)! Its writers (approximately 40 of them) were from every walks of life, who lived in different places. For instance, Moses was in the wilderness, Jeremiah in dungeon, Daniel on hillsides, Luke did while travelling, John in exile, and so on. Its writers lived at different times such as time of war like David, and time of peace like Solomon. Despite the fact that the book was written with different moods, across continents of Africa, Asia, Europe, the continuity of thought, message, and history is unique!

Another intriguing fact was that the Bible was written in three languages – Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, yet its continuity was intact. What about the subject matters? It were controversial, which touches the origin of man and the universe, the nature of God, the nature of man, and man's redemption. Yet, there is harmony and continuity!

### II. The Bible Is Unique In Its Translation And Circulation

Among books ever translated into other languages was the Bible. It was one of the first major books translated. Take for instance, the Septuagint version of the Old Testament was translated into Greek in 250 B.C. It has been reported that between 1950 – 1960, three thousand Bible translators were at work. Guinness Book of record asserts that "by the end of 1993, the whole Bible had been translated into 337 languages; 2,062 languages have translations of at least one book of the Bible." - Guinness Book of World Records (1998).

What do you think about the circulation of the Bible? Is it not unique? How many religious books have ever enjoyed such uniqueness? We hereby submit that the CIRCULATION OF THE BIBLE makes it unique! As of 1804, 409 million copies had been circulated. Also, the records had shown that as of 1932, one and a third billion copies of the Bible were already in circulation in the world. The Bible has been referred to by the Guinness Book of World Records as "The world's best-selling and most widely distributed book" with an estimated 2.5 billion copies sold, 1815-1975."





### III. The Bible Is Unique In Its Survival

Before the advent of printing machine, the Bible has to be copied by hands over hundreds of years, yet its style, correctness, or existence did not diminish. That is great! However, when compared with other ancient writings, the manuscript evidence of the Bible is greater than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined! (Copeland, 2021). This fact is sufficient to convince its readers and ensure that we are reading the words of the original.

Furthermore, it is unique because of its SURVIVAL THROUGH PERSECUTION. Many have tried to burn it, ban it, and otherwise outlaw it. Some have even bought it and throw it inside sea. Yet, it survive. The Bible survive its critics and their criticisms. Can you think of any other book that has received such a great criticism as the Bible? No religious book has received such a great criticism as the Bible in the history of mankind ever. In all these and through the thick and thin, the Bible survive.

### IV. The Bible Is Unique In Its Teaching

Taking a cursory look on the prophecy of the Bible, one will come to the conclusion that "There is no other book of religious antiquity which provides so many explicit prophecies: so distant in the future and which came to pass as if it was a script acted." It is a book of History. It is a book of personalities.

The Bible is trustworthy, it is a book that did not hide the lapses of its heroes or attempts to justify their actions and inactions. It tell of the hypocrisy of Peter (**Galatians 2:11**), cowardice of Abraham (**Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-14**), drunkenness of Noah (**Genesis 9:21-22**), division and materialism of churches (**I Corinthians, Revelation 2-3**)! The teachings it presents were unique, divine, and are words of life (**Acts 5:20**).

### V. The Bible Is Unique In Its Influence

Considering the influence of the Bible, one has no other conclusion that it is unique. Take for example the influence the Bible has on virtually everything is amazing and intriguing. For example, look at the judicial system, it is based upon many of the principles found in the Bible. Likewise, our standards of morality, scientific principles, psychology, human relations, employment relations (**Ephesians 6:5-8**), geography, astronomy, and so many other areas are influenced by the Bible. It is really awesome.

### VI. Others

Other points that can be considered include: sacrifice for sins, and its record of eye-witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Likewise, message of equal love is worth our consideration. The Bible preaches no racism or favouritism, and preaches unmerited favour. Actually, the Bible is unique.

### Conclusion

Attempt has been made to show the uniqueness of the Bible to other religious books. This piece had not attempted to prove that the Bible is the word of God. With some of its uniqueness that have been evaluated, it is therefore recommended that *you therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a bearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does (James 1:21-25).*

Please, let us accept the Bible and its message into our hearts and lives the way God intended!

See "Bibliographies" on page 37 for the list of works consulted while writing this article.

# World Religions

## Unity in Diversity - What is Wrong?

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

In the context of our discussion, Unity in Diversity refers to the act of being united despite all of the doctrinal differences that we may have... Put simply, it does not matter whether you are a Catholic, a Pentecostal, a Protestant, a Jehovah's Witness, etc... This ecumenical spirit is a disguise for compromise and this idea is contrary to some clear Bible passages.


During his debate with E.R. Harper on the institutional controversy, Fanning Yater Tant said in his very first speech; "There is only one thing worse than division among God's people, and that one thing is unity in error." This statement indeed, is germane and true. In Genesis 11:1-9, we find that the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. God Himself testified of their unity when He said; "Behold the people are one and they all have one language..." (vs.6). Unfortunately, their unity became a negative one when they attempted to do what was contrary to God's command – build the tower of Babel. These people were united in error.

Today, the world is so divided in so many things. There are diversities of languages, different cultures, different religions, ideologies, etc. in the world and it is obvious that the whole world is no longer one. And with particular reference to the religious division, just as it is wrong for people to be united in error, it is also sinful to be divided. A house divided against itself cannot stand (**Mark 3:25**). If we believe in the one Almighty God and truly serve Him, our religious activities and acts of worship that we render unto Him should not differ. If there are differences in the way we worship God, it is either God has given us different, contradictory instructions on how we are to worship Him or God has given us the same instruction on how we are to worship Him but we have refused to patiently read and understand God's instruction.

Imagine a father who tells his first son to take his car to

a mechanic on Friday evening (say 6pm) to get some minor fault fixed; and then he instructs his second son to take the same car to a car wash at 6pm Friday evening to get the car washed; and then he drops the car key on the table where it can be reached and he went out of the house. These are two different instructions given to the children by the father. By 6pm, the two boys got up to the table to pick the car key and drive out the vehicle in obedience to their father's instruction and a serious argument arose between the two children, with each of them claiming they have been instructed by their father to drive out the car to a particular place.

Indeed, the children are divided at that point but their division is caused by their father and not by them. The father is the author of that confusion that exists between the two children. And so, if God is actually responsible for the different denominational churches that we have in the world today, existing with different conflicting and confusing doctrines, giving each "general overseers" and church founders different instructions on "how to run" their church, then it means that He is the author of confusion. But we know that God is not the author of confusion (**I Corinthians 14:33**) and He would not behave like the man in the example earlier given. Have you wondered why Abel's offering (an act of worship) was accepted and that of Cain was rejected (**Genesis 4:3-7**)? It was not because God gave Cain and Abel different instructions but it was because Abel acted by faith which comes "by hearing and hearing by the



word of God” (**Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17**) but Cain acted without faith. In other words, Abel listened to the instruction of God on what and how they should conduct their offering; but Abel did not. The same way God rejected Cain's worship is the same way He would reject the worship of those who do not follow His instruction today (**Matthew 15:8-9**). It does not matter if majority of people in the world are doing it in a particular way. That would not serve as authority for anyone to do it.

Unity is a beautiful thing and its importance cannot be overemphasized. Once a people is united, great things can be achieved. In fact, Jesus Christ prayed for the unity of His followers (**John 17:1-26**). The apostle Paul on several occasions emphasized and pleaded that Christians be united (**I Corinthians 1:10**). In his letter to the Ephesians, he emphasized certain areas or pillars of unity including one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all (**Ephesians 4:3-6**). When you look through the New Testament, you would discover that the word “doctrine” is always in the singular form whenever it is in reference to Christ's (**II John 9; II Timothy 4:16**). This shows we have just one doctrine in contrast to that of devils and men (**Matthew 15:8-9; I Timothy 4:1-3**). All these, point to the fact that unity is germane and it is not only necessary but compulsory for brethren to “dwell together in unity” (**Psalms 133:1-3**).

### **A Sincere But Erroneous Effort**

Having identified that division is sinful and because of the pitfall of religious division, many sincere individuals have pitched their tents towards the “Unity in Diversity” concept. Very recently, in a social media (WhatsApp) group comprising of people from different denominations and including members of

the church of Christ, a Bible topic was presented. And because some members of the group disagree with the subject taught, it was advised that we should stop teaching topics in which we hold different views but that we should rather focus on areas that we all agree. Often time, when false doctrines are corrected, you will hear brethren say that we can be united in diversity and we should not bother to talk about the issues that we hold different views about. The “unity in diversity” concept in religion could be a sincere effort but it is an erroneous one and it is not a solution to religious division.

In the context of our discussion, unity in diversity refers to the act of being united (having same goal and working together to achieve it) despite all of the doctrinal differences that we may have. In other words, what this means is that we would ignore all of the differences that we may have in terms of doctrine and just work together focusing on the goal. Put simply, it does not matter whether you are a Catholic, a Pentecostal, a Protestant, a Jehovah's Witness, etc. provided you call on the name of Jesus and have the same heavenly goal, it does not matter how much doctrinal differences exist between them as they can still be united despite the differences. This ecumenical spirit is a disguise for compromise and this idea is contrary to some clear Bible passages. In the first place, Amos 3:3 appears to cause some havoc to the idea that we may work together despite our doctrinal disagreements. And then passages such as Romans 16:17; II John 10-11; Galatians 1:6-9 seem to be in direct opposition to the idea that those who teach contrary to the doctrine of Christ should be applauded. On what basis do we embrace the spreaders of false doctrine? Are we not commanded to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered? (**Jude 3**). Besides, it seems that those who advocate for unity

in diversity concept do not understand the gravity of teaching false doctrines; false doctrines render worship useless and many people will go to hell if they are not corrected (**Matthew 15:8-9; 7:21; II John 9**). No wonder why James advised that many should not become teachers for we shall receive a stricter judgment (**James 3:1**).

In Nigeria, some organizations are in existence whose aim is to foster unity among the “Christians” and “Christian denominations.” For example, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is an umbrella organization containing numerous Christian denominations in Nigeria; the Joint Christian Campus Fellowship (JCCF) is the body of all “Christian fellowships” on Nigerian campuses. We even have the National Ministers Forum (NMF); a so-called body of preachers in Nigerian churches. All of these efforts are unscriptural and no matter how sincere the intention of the founders is, it is not in harmony with the word of God. How can a Catholic bishop who believes and practice infant baptism be the president of a “Christian association” wherein a Baptist is a member? Or how can a Celestial church pastor that believes in burning of candles and removing of shoes before entering the church building lead a body of Christian denominations wherein a Deeper Life Church pastor is a member? The simple reason is: all of them have compromised their faith and is willing to accept anyone for who they are. The Christian religion is not like that. We are to hold fast to that pattern of sound words that we have received and not compromise it for any reason (**II Timothy 1:13**) and we are to remain steadfast and immovable (**I Corinthians 15:58**).

The solution to religious divisions is not to be united in diversity. To be united in diversity is to be united in error. What everyone needs to do is to go back to the

Bible to find out what He wants us to do and how He wants us to do it.

## References

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## If Jesus Came To Your House

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two -  
If He came unexpectedly, I wonder what you'd do.  
Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,  
And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best,  
And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have him there -  
That serving Him in your own home is joy beyond compare.

But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door  
With arms outstretched in welcome to your heavenly Visitor?  
Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in?  
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?  
Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard?  
And wish you hadn't uttered that last, loud, hasty word?  
Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?  
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?  
And I wonder - if the Savior spent a day or two with you,  
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?  
Would you go right on saying the things you always say?  
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?

Continue on page 18.

# DISCOURSE

## Infant Baptism Is Authorized In The Scriptures

**Affirmative: Christopher Cletus Sunom (Roman Catholic Church)**

**Denial: Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba (Church of Christ)**

The above proposition is affirmed by Christopher Cletus Sunom (Roman Catholic Church) stating that the practice of infant baptism is scriptural. O. Lesley Egharevba (Church of Christ) denies the proposition and insists that infant baptism is a human doctrine which has no scriptural precedent.

### Affirmative By Christopher Cletus Sunom

#### Introduction

The doctrine of infant baptism is a very controversial teaching in Christendom today, the assertion being that infants are not yet accountable enough to believe and accept the message of salvation for themselves. The aim of this writing is to show the scriptural basis for infant baptism for readers to see that it is not just a vain philosophy of man.

The grounds for argument of the validity of infant baptism has been purely on that of personal faith and personal renouncement of sin (repentance). The question that now arises from the doctrine of baptism is that; can the faith of one stand for another and can repentance be professed for another as it seems to be the case scenario in infant baptism? In as much as baptism is for repentance and for the profession of a newly found faith accepted and received in the heart it is first of all a covenant as will soon be established.

#### Baptism As A Covenant

Baptism is not just for the forgiveness of sin or for the profession of a newly found faith accepted in the heart; it is an entrance into a covenant. Jesus was without sin (**1 Peter 2:22**) yet underwent baptism. In his reply to John he said he did so in order to fulfill all righteousness. It was after this that the proclamation of his ministerial call (to preach the message of the kingdom) began (**Mark 1:14**). In his baptism, a new

order of things was brought to limelight (**Mathew 12:28**) – the gospel of the kingdom.

Though He was without sin, He went through baptism and commanded His disciples to do likewise to all those who will accept Him. In His discourse with Nicodemus He clearly stated that unless a man is born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (**John 3:5**). Beyond just a ritual for initiation and profession of faith conceived in the heart, it was meant to be an initiation into a kingdom; a portrayal of our sharing in his death, burial and resurrection unto a new life (**Romans 6:3-5**). Though having no sin or any need of repentance Jesus subjected Himself to it as a pattern for all those who will accept Him (**1 Peter 2:22, Mathew 28:19**).

Just like the covenant established between God and Noah, the covenant of circumcision between God and Abraham and his covenant unto Israel through Moses; so also is baptism. It is a covenant into the kingdom of God.

The nature of covenant is that it can be entered on behalf of a people. God himself established covenant with men in days of old. We saw the salvation of the then world where God established a covenant with Noah and the entire seed of mankind to come after him; Noah himself received a form of baptism while in the ark as typified by the covenant established between him and God (**Genesis 9:8-11, 1 Peter**



**3:20-21).** This covenant was between him, his entire household and his seeds to be born thereafter.

God entered a covenant with the children of Israel likewise in given them the law; it was a baptism into Moses - a typification of the law (**1 Corinthians 10:2**). It was an ordinance that was to stand and speak for all those that will come under the covering of the sons of Israel.

Jesus himself established the new covenant of grace through the baptism of water and of the spirit (**John 3:5**) as a testament to stand for all those that will accept him. Just like in the case of circumcision and of the baptism into Moses and of the covenant with Noah this covenant can stand as a covering not just for the covenantor but for his offspring likewise, the faith of the father can thus stand for his sons until they are old enough to make such profession. We saw illustrations of this in Scriptures where entire household were baptised after the profession of faith by the head of such household (**Act 16:1-31, 18:8**).

With regards to bearing fruit in accordance to repentance to this newly professed faith (**Lk. 3:8-14**) infant baptism is established upon the grounds of agreement between the church, sponsor and parents to bring up the child in the truth and teachings of his newly professed faith until he is matured enough to personally take a stand for his Faith.

Though assertion might arise concerning the validity of infant baptism and from the basis upon which such doctrines are established, its origin can be traced and its authenticity can be judged in light of scriptures. In conclusion, infant baptism is not just a proposition by church Fathers neither is it a historical tradition handed down from generations past but is likewise a doctrinal teaching having its root and origin in scriptures.

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## QUOTES

1. God loves each of us as if there were only one of us - Augustine
2. You are the only Bible some unbelievers will ever read." - John MacArthur
3. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life - Revelation 2:10
4. Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows; it empties today of its strength. - Corrie Ten Boom
5. God doesn't take you in a straight line. There are twists and turns. It may not happen the way you thought, but the disappointments, the bad breaks are all a part of God's plan. - Joel Osteen
6. Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire? - Corrie Ten Boom
7. Great moves of God are usually preceded by simple acts of obedience. - Steven Furtick
8. Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion; it is like a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ. - Billy Graham
9. True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourselfless. - Rick Warren
10. God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons that we could learn in no other way. - C.S. Lewis



## Infant Baptism Is Authorized In The Scriptures

### Denial by O. Lesley Egharevba

The above proposition is not true and my task is to deny it. I shall focus on the affirmative article written by Mr. Christopher Sunom and show that the position he has taken with regards to the subject of infant baptism is unscriptural. Without an iota of doubt, I can safely say (in contrast to the above proposition) that infant baptism is a human tradition. It is a digression from the New Testament order of things and should be abandoned by people who have regard for biblical authority.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Christopher shows no single Bible passage where an infant was baptized, yet claims the practice of infant baptism is “a doctrinal teaching having its root and origin in scriptures.” For a practice to have its origin in the scriptures, there ought to be a **direct command** authorizing such in the scriptures; or at least **an example** showing that such was done in the Bible; or an inference from the scriptures that is necessary. None of these was shown in the affirmative article.

In the command of baptism given by Jesus, only those who can hear and believe the gospel were to be baptized – “**He who believes and is baptized shall be saved**” (Mark 16:16). The gospel is to be preached unto those who can decide whether to obey or reject it. Even Mr. Christopher inadvertently admitted this fact when he wrote; “He (Jesus) went through baptism and commanded His disciples to do likewise to **all those who will accept Him.**” (emphasis L.E.).

Surprisingly, Mr. Christopher did not explain how an infant could accept Christ. We only find the opinionated statement that “the faith of the father can thus stand for his sons until they are old enough to make such profession.” This is false as no scripture

validates such claim. What if they were never old enough to make such profession and they die at infancy, will the faith of the father still stand for the child on the judgment day? Well, the scriptures teach that each one will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and everyone will receive the things he had done while in the body (II Corinthians 5:10; cf. Ezekiel 18:20; 28:15). Besides, the word “UNTIL” indicates a terminal moment. Mr. Christopher implies the faith of the father will NO LONGER stand for his sons when they are old enough or have attained the age of accountability. This invariably means the father's purported faith for them is an exercise in futility! How come? Firstly, before the children were old enough, God does not hold them accountable. Secondly, when they are indeed old enough to accept the Lord and serve Him whatever faith the parent had on their behalf is useless as their fate would be based on their personal faith.

In all the NT examples of baptism, there is not a single one that shows that any of the candidates was an infant. Even Jesus Christ that Mr. Christopher made reference to in his article, was not baptized at infancy. And those who came to John to be baptized were those who could confess their sins – “And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, **confessing their sins.**” (Mark 1:5) This indicates infants were not included. The arguments made in favour of infant baptism by Mr. Christopher are just perversion of Bible passages in an attempt to smuggle in the concept of infant baptism into the scriptures.

### Addressing The Arguments

One argument introduced by Mr. Christopher is the covenant argument. He identified three major



covenants in the Old Testament (Noahic, Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants) and indicated that these covenants were made between God, the individual and the descendants. Thus, he hinted that baptism is a similitude of such covenants made by Jesus with perhaps, the first Christians and all their descendants that will come after. It is necessary at this point that I quote him directly. In his words;

*“Jesus himself established the new covenant of grace through the baptism of water and of the spirit (John 3:5) as a testament to stand for all those that will accept him. Just like in the case of circumcision and of the baptism into Moses and of the covenant with Noah this covenant can stand as a covering not just for the covenantor but for his offspring likewise, the faith of the father can thus stand for his sons until they are old enough to make such profession. We saw illustrations of this in Scriptures where entire household were baptised after the profession of faith by the head of such household (Act 16:1-31, 18:8).”*

There is a mix-up of things in the above statement of Mr. Christopher. First, the Lord promised Noah and his descendants that He would never again destroy the world with a universal flood. He made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his descendants, establishing the rainbow as the sign of His covenant (**Genesis 9:1-17**). This rainbow covenant calls for no human response. And it is not parallel to the command of baptism.

Secondly, concerning the covenant of circumcision that God made with Abraham, yes, it was meant to be a continuous act to be done among the Jews on their male child that is eight day old. Take note that the female children were excluded from that practice; and if Mr. Christopher tries to create a parallel between infant circumcision and infant baptism, he would need to exclude the female babies from baptism. And we know that God's command on baptism is not gender restricted. Why then do the Catholics baptize

female babies since the covenant of circumcision did not affect the female ones?

Also note that each individual is to be circumcised and there is nothing like “the faith of the father standing for his sons until they are old enough to make such profession.” God had commanded that each male child should be circumcised once they are eight day old (**Genesis 17:10-12**). This command was obeyed by Abraham and his descendants continuously until Christ had established the New Covenant (**Galatians 3:19,24-15**). Similarly, baptism is commanded to be done unto anyone who believes (**Mark 16:16**) and has repented (**Acts 2:38**) and this should not be a problem to anyone who fears God and wants to keep His commandments (**cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13**).

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:41, only “those who gladly received his word” were baptized and not infants who know nothing. Also, there is a difference between circumcision and baptism; they are completely two different things and are not linked together in any way. Circumcision has nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins but baptism is done for the forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**). To insist that the Old Testament sets a precedent for infant baptism in the New Testament is to make a false claim. Infant baptism is not authorized in Genesis 17:7 nor in any other Old Testament passage mentioning children or descendants. The same way, the “baptism into Moses” is not related to the baptism enjoined by Christ and is not a justification for infant baptism. Paul did not discuss personal baptism in I Corinthians 10:2 and the Israelites were baptized as a nation into Moses. The literal interpretation is that the Israelites were baptized in the sense that they were surrounded by water and the cloud while crossing the red sea. This event, in context, should not be misconstrued.





John 3:5 cited by Mr. Christopher discusses “a man” not an infant; a mature person who has grown in the ways of the world and not children who are candidates of the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 18:3; 19:14**). Mr. Christopher alluded to Romans 6:3-5, he should have continued to verse 17 where inspired Paul informed his addressees that “*ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*”

And then again, if according to Mr. Christopher, “*Jesus himself established the new covenant of grace through the baptism of water and of the spirit (John 3:5) as a testament to stand for all those that will accept him,* at what point is a baby qualified to accept Christ? Note that Mr. Christopher did not say that baptism is to be done for those that have accepted Christ; rather, it is to be done to those who will accept Him. How do we know if a baby is willing to accept Christ so that baptism can be rendered unto such? Perhaps, that is where the so called faith of the father will stand for the sons until they are old enough to make such profession? And then Act 16:1-31, 18:8 were offered as proof texts wherein the claim is made that the “entire household were baptized after the profession of faith by the head of such household (**Act 16:1-31, 18:8**).” Let us consider these passages. We have two accounts of “household baptisms” in Acts 16; Lydia's household and the jailor's household.

“*And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.” (**Acts 16:15**)*

“*Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.” (**Acts 16:32-33**).*

“*Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians,*

*bearing, believed and were baptized.” (**Acts 18:8**)*

Because we find in these texts that the “households” were baptized, Mr. Christopher thinks that infants were included in the list of those baptized. This is not only an assumption but a neglect of the context. In all of the above instances of household baptisms, the candidates for baptism first **heard** and **believed** before baptism (**Acts 16:14; 32; 18:8**). These, an infant cannot do. Neither can anyone prove with absolute certainty that the baptized households were not referring to homes with mature offspring who could obey the gospel. Lydia did not even live in Philippi. She was from Thyatira and she only came to Philippi to trade. She may have left her kids at home (if she has kids) and her household could refer to her servants, not necessarily infants. Plausibly, a ruler of a synagogue would be a man advanced in years with grown offspring and other young adults studying under his tutelage. Since not all households are blessed with infants, it cannot be necessarily inferred from these household baptisms that infants are involved. Rather than speculate for or against the topic, it is good to abide with whatever is expressly stated in the scriptures. It is only those who have been taught what Jesus says, are subjects of baptism in Matthew 28:19. Likewise, Mark 16:15-16 shows that baptism is only for those capable of hearing, believing and voluntarily submitting to the gospel of Christ.

Mr. Christopher affirms that “*infant baptism is established upon the grounds of agreement between the church, sponsor and parents to bring up the child in the truth and teachings of his newly professed faith until he is matured enough to personally take a stand for his Faith.*” But there is absolutely no scripture that authorize or validates this claim. God is not involved in such lying agreement wherein a PROXY faith is described as 'his [infant's] new PROFESSED faith.' Children are safe and there



is no New Testament passage that indicates such must be baptized to be saved; baptism is always for men and women –Acts 8:5-12. God calls individuals into His kingdom via the preaching of the gospel (**I Thessalonians 2:12; II Thessalonians 2:14**). Obedience depends on freewill and entails personal confession of faith, repentance of sin and immersion in water. No one is saved by proxy and none will be judged by proxy on the last day.

### Conclusion

Infant baptism is not taught in the scriptures. It is of human origin and even Catholic authorities acknowledge this fact. According to José Orlandis, a Roman Catholic Priest and historian, in his book, *A Short History of Catholic Church*, he said; “*in the course of the fourth century it became quite common for people to be born into Christian families, and by the next century, in the whole Mediterranean world, this was the common pattern. This means that the process of baptism changed considerably. Infant baptism became the general pattern*” (Orlandis, 1993, p.35 cf. Koch, 1997, p.116 cited in Pinedo, 2008, p.150).

In 418 AD, the Council of Carthage officially accepted the practice of infant baptism and endorsed a condemnation for those who opposed it. The canon number 2 read thus:

*“If any man says that new-born children need not be baptized, or that they should indeed be baptized for the remission of sins, but that they have in them no original sin inherited from Adam which must be washed away in the bath of regeneration, so that in their ease the formula of baptism 'for the remission of sins' must not be taken literally, but figuratively, let him be anathema; because, according to Romans 5:12, the sin of Adam (in quo omnespeccaverunt) has passed upon all.”*

The doctrine of inherited sin is a major post-apostolic error which gave birth unto other errors. With all

these, it is evident that infant baptism is not commanded by God, but rather is a man-made tradition. Those who are conscious of going to heaven must abandon it.

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## If Jesus Came To Your House

Continued from page 12.

- Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace?
- And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?
- Would you sing the songs you always sing, and read the books you read,
- And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?
- Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go?
- Or would you, maybe, change your plans for just a day or so?
- Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends?
- Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?
- Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?
- Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?
- It might be interesting to know the things that you would do
- If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.

Lois Blanchard Eades

# QUIBBLES THAT BACKFIRED

This section tagged "Quibbles that Backfired" deals with interesting statements and arguments that have been made by people during discussions by way of defense in attempts to justify and sustain their position regarding the subject involved. Some of these quibbles backfired in that the termination of it showed the complete incongruity of the statement made. Others backfired because they reverted upon the person who made them and put him in the very same predicament in which he intended to put the other fellow.

W. C. Porter met Mr. F. S. Gipson in 1934 in a discussion on the establishment of the kingdom, or the church. Gipson contended that the kingdom, or church, was established during the personal ministry of Christ on earth while Porter contended that it was established on the first Pentecost after Christ arose; that it came with power, according to Mark 9:1 and in Luke 19 the Lord gave a parable in which He sent a nobleman into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return. Porter showed this nobleman went into a far country. He left one place and went into another place which is a far country and then returned (**Luke 19:12**). Porter asked, "Please tell us, what was the far country to which the nobleman went, who represented Jesus Christ?" Porter contended that He went to heaven, and did not receive the kingdom until He went to heaven, and He is coming back again. Jesus got the kingdom after He went away, and He got it before He is coming back. They are wrong in saying He established it before He left, and others are wrong in saying it will be established when He returns. The Lord said it was between the two. What was the far country? In response, Mr. Gipson said the far country was the earth. When the Lord left heaven and came to the earth, He came to the far country, got His kingdom and went back to heaven. Porter replied, "Now the record says that when he left the place to go to the far country, that he left citizens behind him. And those citizens hated him. People in heaven He left behind, hated Him after He left. When He received His kingdom and went back to heaven, the Lord said, 'bring hither my enemies, and slay them

before me.' The Lord had enemies in heaven, and had them put to death when He got back from the earth, because the earth was the far country to which He went." And that was how Mr. Gipson's quibble backfired!

Paul K. Williams of the church of Christ met Ahmed Deedat, the Islamic orator in a public debate in 1983 at Cecil Payne Stadium, Johannesburg, South Africa. Williams was affirming that "Jesus Christ Was Raised From The Dead" while Deedat was denying the proposition. Without paying any attention to the affirmative arguments of Williams but rather came up with something else, Deedat's main argument was based on Matthew 12:40; the sign of Jonah. He said that just as Jonah was alive when he went into the whale, and was alive when he came out, so Jesus was alive when He went into the tomb and alive when He came out. In response, Williams said that when there is a comparison, it is wrong to use it in any way except as it was intended and told how Jesus said in John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up." Williams asked, "Was the serpent alive or dead when it was lifted up?" The point of comparison was very clearly that Jesus was going to be lifted up. Nothing was said about "alive" or "dead." Similarly, when He said that as Jonah was in the great fish three days and three nights, the point of comparison was the time Jesus would be in the tomb, not whether He would be alive or dead. Video of this debate is available at <https://knowyourbible.co.za/food-for-thought/debate/>

# Church History

## The Protestant Reformation Movement

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

There are many different types of Protestant Churches in the world today. What is their origin and how did all these come to be? To understand the Protestant Reformation Movement, it is necessary to go back in history to the 16th century when the Roman Catholic Church dominated the whole of Western Europe.

### Introduction

Up until the year 1500, the Roman Catholic Church was very powerful both politically and religiously. During this period, the Roman Catholic Church had been seen as an institution plagued by internal power struggles. Popes and cardinals lived like kings having temporal and spiritual power; they commanded armies, made political alliances and enemies and sometimes waged war.

### The Reformation

Originally the word Reformation (from the Latin *reformo*, meaning “to renew”) suggested the removal of impurities or corruption. The Reformation Movement is generally recognized to have begun in 1517, when Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German monk posted his ninety-five (95) theses on the door of the castle Church in Wittenberg. Luther believed that individuals could only be saved by personal faith in Jesus Christ and the grace of God (*sola fide* – Faith alone), and that the Catholic Church's practices that focus on work (such as Pilgrimages, the sale of indulgences to obtain forgiveness, and prayer addressed to saints) were immoral. He also advocated that the Bible be the sole source of authority to Christians (*sola scriptura* – scriptures alone) and advocated that the Bible should be printed in the language of the reader, rather than in Latin. The pope condemned the reformation movement and in the year 1521 in the Diet of Worms council, Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Church. Afterwards he was sheltered by Friedrich, elector of

Saxony, and then he translated the Bible into German language and continued his output of pamphlets.

### Spread of the Reformation Movement

The Reformation Movement spread far beyond Germany in the early 1500s. Luther, while pivotal, was only one of many Christians struggling to reform the Church.

In Switzerland – Ulrich Zwingli also challenged the authority of Rome from his pulpit in Zurich; he rallied against Church corruption and any practices that were not specifically mentioned in the Bible. Zwingli agreed with Luther that faith was important for justification and salvation but he had a different understanding of the Lord's Supper. Zwingli's Ideas spread through Switzerland and his theology became common amongst the Switz.

In Geneva, a French man named John Calvin, also preached reform. Like Luther, Calvin was convinced that salvation was by God's grace, but Calvin emphasized predestination; the notion that God had already decided those who would be saved. However Calvin found a more positive place within the Christian community than Luther did and Calvinism spread to France, Netherlands and beyond.

In Scotland, John Knox, who spent time in Geneva and was greatly influenced by John Calvin, preached at the main church in Edinburgh where he founded Presbyterianism. Knox insisted that every person be able to read the words of God for themselves.



Protestant ideas spread quickly to Denmark through its ruler, King Christian III of Denmark who was present at the Diet of Worms and was inspired by Luther's brave stand and returned home to establish Lutheranism as Denmark's religion.

### **Impact of the Reformation Movement on Christianity**

At the time of the reformation, the Bible was literally a closed book for majority of the populace as only key members of the Catholic Church had access to it and it was available only in Latin. At the same time the reformers recognized that Scriptures were the supreme authority for faith and practice in the Church, and so efforts were made to make the Scriptures more available to every Christian and they began translating the Bible into different languages for easy understanding. For the first time, common people could read the word of God and worship Him in their own language.

Prior to the reformation movement, cultural Christianity denominated Europe as everyone was considered a Christian due to Christianity being the official religion of the land. There was little emphasis on personal faith and belief; one was considered a Christian due to social standings and birth condition and not necessarily personal conviction. The reformation movement through study of the scriptures came to understand faith as the true requirement of being a Christian, shifting emphasis to the spiritual state of man. This change in view came with the realization that not everyone in the broader culture was a Christian, and so evangelism took a whole new level of urgency, teaching faith and personal relationship with God as the basis of Christian living. The church began to be viewed more as a body of believers and not a political and social estate which it had become.

There was also clear Church hierarchy. Famous individuals from the past, as well as members of the clergy were in a class by themselves, most of the churchgoers had little part in the life of the church. In the reformation movement this hierarchy was abolished and every believer was considered to be a saint who could intercede on behalf of others and have a vital role as a member of the body of Christ.

While the goal of the reformation movement was to purge Christianity of false doctrines and practices, one of the practical adverse effects was that it led to diversity of the Christian faith, with terms like "Lutheran", "Calvinist", "Presbyterian" replacing the term "Christian" as the sole identity of professors of the Christian faith. It gave grounds for further division in Christianity. Such division, Apostle Paul condemned in his writings to the Corinthians (**1 Corinthians 1:11-13**). Also, some of the teaching that they advocate are not in line with what the scriptures teach. For example, TULIP –mnemonic for the five points Calvinist doctrine (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints) are all unscriptural concepts but sadly, it is being accepted by almost all the protestant denominations. See the "Salvation" section of this journal for the refutation of these concepts.

### **Conclusion**

The Reformation Movement is a key part of Church history, it brought about a lot of changes to Christianity at the time. There were positive effects of the reformation movement, such as emphasis on faith and the scriptures as important aspect of Christian life. However, it also marked the beginning of further divisions in Christianity, spirally over time and now we have over 40,000 denominations in the world today.

# BARBS WITH A POINT

## Tongues – A Human Language Or Just Gibberish?

By Patrick Donahue | Alabama, USA

Were the tongues in the Bible just gibberish like what we see in so called “Pentecostal” churches today? I’ve been to a number of services where people were claiming to speak in tongues, but it just sounded like a bunch of gibberish to me. Is that what we see in the New Testament? Let us answer that question from the Bible.

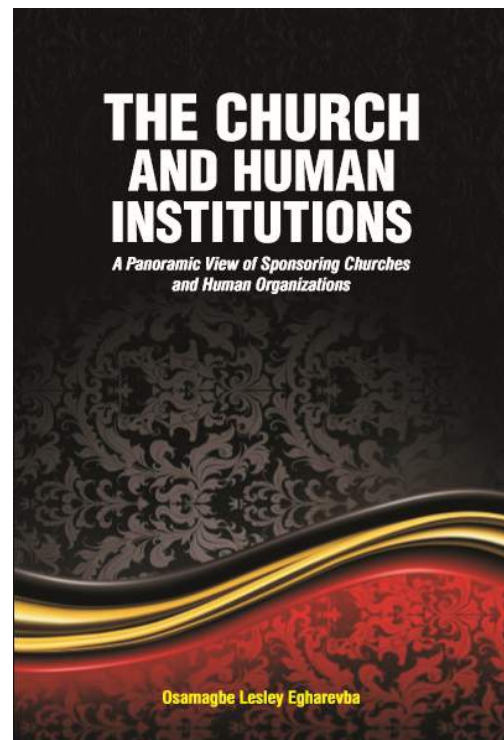
Acts 2 would be a good place to start because that is the first place we see Christians speaking in tongues in the New Testament. Verse 4 in the NKJV says the apostles spoke with “other tongues.” I am currently studying via phone with a lady who has spent her entire adult life in New York, but she was brought up in the country of Columbia. She speaks English very well, but if I were to ask you “What is her native or mother tongue?,” how would you answer? Spanish, right? You see how the word “tongue” is used to refer to a human language?

And the same thing is going on in Acts 2. As we said, verse 4 says the apostles spoke with “other tongues.” That would mean languages other than what the apostles were used to speaking in. We know that from verse 6 because it says their audience (from “every nation under heaven” – verse 5) heard the apostles speak in the listener’s “language.” So the apostles spoke in tongues but “every man heard them speak in his own language.” See how “tongue” means human “language” here, not just gibberish?

Continuing on, the audience says in verse 8 they were hearing the preaching in their own “language” while the same audience says in verse 11 they were hearing the preaching in their own “tongues.” Again, do you see how the words “tongue” and language” (referring to an actual human language) are used

interchangeably?

The point of speaking in tongues was so that a person who had never studied a particular foreign language could be miraculously enabled to speak in such foreign language so he could immediately communicate the gospel to an audience that didn’t speak his language. The people claiming to do that today never speak in an actual foreign (human) language; instead it is just a bunch of nonsensical syllables strung together randomly. Plain and simple – it is gibberish. It is not even a second cousin to the miraculous tongues we read about in the Bible that ceased when the New Testament was completely revealed and put together according to I Cor. 13:8-13.



An invaluable book on the church and Human Institutions. Contact the author at [osamagbelesley1@gmail.com](mailto:osamagbelesley1@gmail.com) to get a copy.

# BARBS WITH A POINT

## God Holds Your Breath

By Henry Stevenson III | Texas, USA

But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the GOD IN WHOSE HAND THY BREATH IS, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

Daniel 5:23

There's something in this verse that we shouldn't miss. Daniel tells the prideful king Belshazzar that he has been praising false gods who had done nothing for him, while he was ignoring the God of heaven who he owes his life. Daniel said that Belshazzar depended on him for every breath he took.

**Every breath is in God's hand.**

Think about that. The reason you took your first breath this morning is because God gave you that breath. He not only created you, He also sustains you every minute of your day.

**Every breath you take.**

When is the last time you thanked God for the air you were breathing? Have you ever thanked God for the ability to breathe?

Belshazzar took his last breath later that same evening. God numbered his days and brought them to an end. And he did it that very night.

God does not owe any of us another breath. What is remarkable is that some are going to use their breath today to curse God's holy name. God ought to stop our hearts right then when we blaspheme Him in that way. To think that God allows us to continue breathing after doing that is a testimony to God's patience and longsuffering toward us.

None of us deserves to breath any more than Belshazzar did. Maybe we should all take a deep breath (and feel the air rush into your lungs and then rush out) and then humbly thank God for the ability to do so.

Father, You are the Creator and Sustainer of all life. Give us grace that we may all live throughout this day. May we use every breath to glorify Your HOLY name.

**Be Blessed**



# Institutionalism

## The Silence of the Scriptures

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

*We cannot know the mind of God except He has spoken. We know God's mind by looking at what is revealed. He spoke in time past to the fathers through the prophets and has in these last days spoken to us through His son (Hebrews 1:1). His word is with us now to guide us in all things (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3). We are warned not to think of men beyond what is written (I Corinthians 4:6). We must do all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17).*

Suppose you sent someone to get you some fruits and he comes back with some apples, has he obeyed your instruction? Definitely yes! But suppose you sent him to get you some bananas and he comes back with some oranges, would that be obedience to what you have sent him? Not at all for you have specified what he needed to buy. In the first instance, “fruits” is generic and gives the messenger the choice to get anything under the umbrella of what is called fruits but in the second example, orange is specific in the instruction and excludes every other kinds of fruits. But then again, suppose he comes back with the oranges and you asked him why he decided to get oranges instead of bananas that you have sent him, how would you feel when he responds “Sir, you didn't tell me not to buy oranges!”

A lot of people are like this man in the second example. They give credence to God's silence which is an attempt to scoff at God's direct commands. Oftentimes, you hear people say “show me in the scripture where God says WE MUST NOT do this or that.” But has God specified what you must do? If yes, then that excludes what He did not mention. Silence of the scripture refers to the absence of Divine revelation or instruction on other related subject matters when there have been specific instructions of God. Let us take a few examples from the scriptures:  
The man of God was specific about the river (Jordan) and the number of times (7) that Naaman should dip

himself (**II Kings 5:10**). But he was silent about other rivers. Naaman even desired other “better” rivers (vs.12), but he could not have been healed if he chose any other river than the one specified. Suppose Naaman had said, “Well, the man of God didn't ask me not to go to River Abana or River Pharpar in Damascus, let me try out those rivers.” Do you think he will be justified? What if he went to the Jordan River and he dipped himself six times, instead of seven, and said “the man of God didn't say I should not dip myself 6 times, so I can do so.” Will that make any sense? Obviously not!

Jesus was specific about the pool the blind man should wash himself (**John 9:7**). The man went and washed himself and came seeing. Notice Jesus mentioned the pool of Siloam but was silent about other pools. The blind man could not have been healed if he desired other pools and went there. But in the command of Baptism, we find that there is no specific instruction on the location of baptism (**John 3:23; Matthew 3:6; Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:18-20**). That is why a man could be baptized anywhere provided there is much water there.

God specified that the priests should come from the tribe of Levi. But notice He was silent about priest coming from other tribes such as Judah, Benjamin, etc. (**Hebrews 7:14**). Can we conclude that since God was silent about it, then it would be acceptable to have priests from other tribes? No. if it were so, Jesus





could have been a priest on earth for He was of the tribe of Judah. But Jesus could not be a priest on earth (**Hebrews 8:4**) and so since God specifically mentioned Levi as the priestly tribe and said nothing about other tribes, they were prohibited from being priests.

Noah was told to build an ark of gopher wood with certain specifications (**Genesis 6:14-22**). God was silent about the use of other kinds of wood. Noah could not have been justified if he used another kind but he was faithful to do “according to all that God commanded him.” (vs. 22)

### **Does the Silence of the Scriptures Authorize?**

The Bible, which is the complete and final revelation of God to man is actually silent about many things. For example, we find that in the New Testament, the Bible says nothing about the use of instrument of music in the Christian worship but specified singing (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**). The Bible says nothing about Missionary Societies but the church (**Eph. 4:15**), infant baptism but alien sinner baptism (**Acts 17:30**) etc. But does the silence of the Scriptures on these things authorize their practice in Christianity? If we answer “yes” to the question, the only way to get out of such predicament is to ask a follow-up question; “Where in God’s word are we told not to use or practice them?” The conclusion will then be that since God never explicitly says we must not do these things, then they are right for us to practice them. This is the same question and response we will frown at when a child who is sent to get bananas but comes back with oranges and say “Sir, you didn’t tell me not to buy oranges!” This same unintelligent response now becomes the defense mechanism for some folks when it comes to the things of God and when they are trapped in their errors.

The truth is this: we cannot know the mind of God except He has spoken. We know God’s mind by looking at what is revealed. He spoke in time past to the fathers through the prophets and has in these last days spoken to us through His son (**Hebrews 1:1**). His word is with us now to guide us in all things (**II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3**). We are warned not to think of men beyond what is written (**I Corinthians 4:6**). We must do all things by the authority of Christ (**Colossians 3:17**).

### **What About Matters Of Liberty?**

If we say the silence of the scriptures does not authorize, what about matters of liberty or expediency? Can we say it is wrong to use microphones, church buildings, baptisteries, etc.? Is the Scripture not silent about these as well? Indeed, those who infringe the silence of the scriptures and try to practice every single thing they consider good, often point to these things to seek justification for their practice. This problem is solved when we understand that there is a big difference between “aid” and “addition.” Aid is usually incidental but addition is not. Microphones, baptisteries, church buildings, etc. are not sinful and are permissible because they are aids used to fulfill a generic (and not specific) instruction. The silence of the scriptures is violated when a man replaces his opinion for what God has specified. It would not be sinful if Naaman had ridden on a donkey or he trekked to River Jordan because he was not given a specific instruction on how to go but he had a specific instruction on where to go and what to do. If he had rode on a donkey; that is an aid to fulfill the command given to him. For someone to argue and say that it was wrong to have used a donkey because God was silent about it is simply begging the question for how to go is not specified.

Church building is an aid to fulfill the command of



“not forsaking the assembling” (**Hebrews 10:25**). Baptistry is an aid to fulfill the command of “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” and we know that “much water” is what is needed (**John 3:23**). Microphone is an aid which increases the audibility of one's voice. Nothing is added to what is said and it merely serves in the capacity of magnifying the voice. We should not misconstrue or conflate aid and addition simply because we want to justify our practices by all means.

### **Conclusion**

God's silence on an issue does not authorize such thing. We must always check to see if our practices are authorized in God's word. This is because there is a way that seems right to a man but the end is destruction (**Proverbs 14:12; 16:25**). Indeed, nothing is scripturally good if it has no approval by God. We must not repeat the mistakes of the Israelites who failed to seek counsel at the mouth of the Lord (**Joshua 9:14**).

First Published in **Defender of Truth Magazine, Volume 1, Number 2, April – June, 2021** (ed. Afolabi Akinyemi)

## **A PREACHER'S RESPONSE TO A DEBATE REQUEST**

**Question:** Dear church of Christ preacher; would you be willing to defend your apparent views of the necessity of baptism for salvation's sake in open public debate with another local church leader from, say the Baptist, or some other local church?

**Answer:** No; I would not be willing to defend “my views” on that or anything else. Why should I want to defend or have anyone accept “my views” on anything? After all, I am just a lowly sinner saved by

grace. And my humanistic, personal viewpoints are just as pointless as the Pope's, Martin Luther's, John Smyth's, or anyone else's, unless, unlike so many of their views, they are completely rooted, grounded in, and absolutely validated, without contradiction, by Scripture (**II Tim. 3:16-4:5**).

However, I would be absolutely delighted, honored, and very humbled to defend the gospel (**Phil. 1:7**) in any well-structured, public debate with any local church leader in order to present/discuss the crystal clear truth of exactly what God's Word emphatically reveals to us about the Biblical essentiality of baptism for the forgiveness of one's sins in order to be saved, and its inherent inclusion in the God-given instruction regarding “saved by grace salvation.”

But please be advised, while I would welcome nothing more, I humbly doubt it will ever happen; in decades past many great debates have often occurred between our brethren and some of our denominational friends and neighbors; and the end result was quite often that many, many people – sometimes almost whole congregations of those denominations – were Biblically converted to Christ and became members of the Lord's church... certainly not because our brethren were any smarter or anything like that, but simply because the Scriptures have not changed (**Psa. 119:89**), and true seekers will always be able to easily see said truth once pointed out upon the printed, sacred page.

C u l l e d f r o m  
<https://churchofchristarticles.com/blog/administrator/response-debate-request/>

# Myth Buster

Who are the "Sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4? Fallen Angels or Human Beings?

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

The interpretation of Gen. 6:1-4 is somewhat difficult and controversial. The debate centers on the interpretation of the phrase "sons of God." Who are they? The crucial question concerns whether the phrase refers to human beings or to spiritual beings.

Gen. 6: 1-4 reads; "When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown." (ESV)

## Angels?

The view that "the sons of God" refer to angels is usually defended on two grounds; first, the phrase "sons of God" as used in Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 and Daniel 3:25 refers unquestionably to angels and secondly the antithesis "sons of God" and "daughters of men". This interpretation can only be correct if the language permits no other. However, that is not the case. In Hosea 1:10, the Israelites are called "sons of the living God" and Psalms 82:6 reads "I have said, ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most High."

The antithesis "sons of God" and "daughters of men" does not prove that the sons of God were angels, since this mode of expression is not unusual in Hebrew. In Jer. 32:20, the expression "in Israel and among men" does not mean that the Israelites were not men; and in Isaiah 43:4 God says He will give men for the Israelites. In all these passages "men" denotes the

the remainder of mankind from those already mentioned.

## The sentence

The statement "sons of God" in Genesis 6 is appropriate only to men. If the sons of God were angels, then the narrative is concerned not only with men, but with angels also, and it is not in the style of the Scriptures to relate judgment on only one party when multiple parties have sinned. In Genesis 3, we see Judgment pronounced on Adam, Eve and the serpent accordingly. If the sons of God were not men, the punishment would need to be specially pointed out in their case. The judgments of God are not only free from all unrighteousness, but also devoid of every kind of partiality.

## Taking Wives

"To take a wife" is a standing expression throughout the whole of the Old Testament for marriage relation established by God at the creation and this is quite sufficient of itself to exclude any reference to angels. Christ Himself states that angels cannot marry (**Matt. 22:30, Mark 12:25**). It cannot be proven that angels by nature possess a material essence adequate for the facilitation of marriage or that by rebellion against God they can acquire it. So we cannot believe that angels, through apostasy from God could acquire sexual powers of which they had previously been incapable of.

## Nephilim

In verse 4, we read of the Nephilim. By translating the word "Nephilim" to mean giants, there seem to be some support for the angel view, however it is important to state that translators have rendered different Hebrew words by one term "giants" such as



Nephilim, Gibborim, Enachim, Rephaim, Emim, Zamzummim and Anakim, which according to Adam Clarke, probably means general persons of great knowledge, piety, courage, wickedness etc. and not men of great stature, as is generally imagined.

The meaning of “Nephilim” is subject to dispute, however, reading of the passage shows the Nephilim were existing before the sons of God began to marry the daughters of men, and clearly distinguishes them from the product of these marriages. Now, if according to the simple meaning of the passage, the Nephilim were in existence at the very time when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, the appearance of the Nephilim cannot afford the slightest evidence that the sons of God were angels.

### **The Fall of Angels**

In 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6, we are told of sinning angels and many attempts have been made to use these passages as a support to the angel theory. However, Peter gives no details as to how the angels sinned and Jude gives two conditions; “kept not their estate” and “left their habitation”, in these descriptions of the angels' sin, there is not the slightest allusion to the sin of taking human wives. Instead, it is clearly relating to the fall of Satan and his angels to whom all that is said concerning their punishment fully applies.

### **Wickedness of Man**

Proponents of the angel theory allude that it is only in their interpretation that the necessity for the flood can be understood. However, from the reading of verses 5-8, we see that the increase in human wickedness and evil led to God's decision to destroy the earth with water. The scriptures affirm that after the flood, the moral corruption of man was the same as before the flood (**Gen. 8:21**), however God promised not to destroy the earth with water as He

had done before. If the race that was destroyed had been one that sprang from angel-fathers, why then was there no improvement after the flood where it was proven that no such relations occurred?

### **Conclusion**

From the account of Genesis 4, every event builds up to the increasing corruption of the human race with the corruption of man climaxing in chapter 6, informing God's decision to destroy the earth. The marriages seem to have led to the increase in human corruption but are no where suggested to be the cause of it, God said unto Noah, “for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (**Gen 6:13**). However, the violence of man had begun with the lineage of Cain, especially with Lamech taking multiple wives and boasting about murder (**Gen 4:19-24**).

All the evidence suggests that the sons of God are not angels, but rather are a race of godly men, who abandoned their religion and went after fleshly desires. In Gen. 4:26, we read that men began to call upon the name of the Lord and so this interpretation seems to be in line with the narrative of the scriptures up until the chapter 6, which makes no mention of the interference of the angels in human activities before or after the flood. Jesus likened His coming to the events of the flood, He said “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark” (**Matt. 24:38**). Again, there is no connection to cross breeding of angels with humans, instead Jesus pointed out the lack of regards towards God and continued indulgence in fleshly activities. He warned Christians in the same vein to “watch” and “be ready”, to avoid making the mistake of the old world, where only one man Noah was found to be righteous in the sight of God.

# IDEAL HOME

## When Parents Fail (Part 3)

By Julius C. Nwankwo | Abia, Nigeria

Only a false religious faith permits a division between "belief" and life... If a generation only has knowledge of His commands and no love for His ways (this is where Christianity has degenerated into a mere religion), then the next generation will depart from those commands. How do we avoid this generational departure? Parents must pass on the fear of the LORD to their children and children's children.

### Formal Teaching

The father is responsible for diligently teaching his children. Interestingly, we do not see God charging preachers, elders, deacons or teachers in the church to do this. We must, therefore, refuse any tendency to pass off our responsibility as fathers to formally teach our children. Instead, we are to embrace our responsibility as a charge from God. What are we to do as parents?

We need to teach God's Words diligently to our children. The content of our instruction is God's words or commands. We need to teach them both the positive and negative commands. Since many of the commands are set within the contexts of interesting historical situations, we are also to recite those narratives. The Lord brings that 'God-conscious' perspective to our children through us as parents. This in turn brings great blessing to our lives.

With a little observation of the typical Christian parents, we can see why many children of Christian families go wayward. The parents simply do not teach their children. Some children have heard their parents teach others but not themselves.

### Informal Teaching

"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

This passage catches parents off guard. Some parents

do have family devotions with their children, but many are too busy to spend any significant time engaging in worthwhile conversation with their children. This whole approach works only if the parents (especially the fathers) really love God with their whole hearts, minds and with all their strength. This passion for God is normal. Anything else is backsliding. We must share our life experiences with our children. When should a father do this? The passage gives us four settings:

#### a. Sitting down in your house

Some fathers make themselves too busy watching television, browsing the Internet, and going to sports events to spend significant time with their children. Others have the time, but the Lord is not on their hearts. They will talk excitedly about some soccer match, some investment or about some project that they are working on. Their main project should be to know God and His Word. This lack of passion becomes obvious to their sons and daughters. Their hearts go somewhere else but not to the Lord. They are only doing what dad does. We should include discipline as God wants us to discipline them. We would hope that our child would act good enough not to need physical discipline, but often than none we see them do those things that are not expected of them, we discipline them if we love them.

"He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24).



“Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell” (**Proverbs 23: 13, 14**). We might fear hurting our children or their emotions with the rod, but they will not be damaged by it. We should teach them to be hard working (**Proverbs 10:4,5**). Training must include areas of responsibility and diligence.

Proper discipline is always motivated by love for the child. Love always keeps the well-being of the child and his future maturity in mind. The parent genuinely cares for the child and so consistently corrects him. We might think our feelings show us a better way, but they betray us. If our feelings tell us to overlook his bad behavior or make excuses for his undisciplined condition then does that not reveal a desire to preserve the parents own comfort? If the parent is unwilling to confront the sin in his child, perhaps it is because the parent cares more about himself than the child.

At times we will need to strike our child hard, but we need not fear. It will not hurt him for long. In fact, it will bring long-term help to the child. Of course, we do not need to bruise or tear the child's skin. A rod (a small fresh branch) enables us to bring a brief stinging pain without any damage. If you need any confidence, just take a good look at those children who are not disciplined. They are proud, unruly, and mouthy, out of control and hurt others. The advantages of discipline are many and far reaching. A parent can wonderfully affect a child's life. Afterwards the parent will reap the beautiful reward of well-trained child and the relationship that it brings.

A father's instruction forms a hedge of protection around the child that will bring long lasting help. The father's wisdom is passed on to the child to become his

wisdom. He does not need to experiment with things to test out their value.

**b. Walking somewhere (today driving or riding).**

Often times the father listens to music or some radio programs that distracts them from having conversation with their children. The children love to talk and ask about things. Do you ask them about their day? Do you like to talk to them? They really like to talk to you.

**c. Lying down (getting ready for bed).**

In the olden days, houses were smaller. Sometimes boys would sleep in one room while the girls in another. This provided a lot of opportunities to share experiences; fathers with their sons and mothers with their daughters. I remember some of my good conversations with my father happened when we were together in his room. Just before going to sleep we talked a bit. If children have their own bedrooms, then the parent should pause and talk with each child before they go asleep. Recount the day a bit. Give them a hug and or kiss.

**d. Getting up (early in the morning).**

The morning sets the pace and attitude of the day. The father should share some reflections from his morning devotions or say some statements that help the children properly look at each day. The father should be an early riser so that he can help encourage the family when they get up.

Every day we face many situations through which the Lord wishes to teach us and then pass those lessons on to our children. Mealtimes are another great opportunity to share about what one is learning. We surround ourselves with what we love. If we love God's Word then it will be all around us. We can put scripture on our computer screens, walls, plaques, etc. We should throw away some of those old items that



show our old treasures and replace them with our growing love of God's Word. Take down those pictures of movie and sports idols. More than this memorize these verses with your children and learn to treasure them. The best place to store God's Word is in our heart. What is on our walls should only reflect what is in our hearts. We put scripture about our home not because it is mandatory but because that is what we like.

What do you decorate your walls with? Would anyone know that you have a great love for God from walking in or around your home? God expects the fathers to take charge of spiritual instruction in the home. The whole family is commanded to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. The father's love, obedience and zeal for the Lord will greatly impact the family. The wife assists the husband in carrying out his responsibilities.

Family devotions are important and necessary to train the children and inspire them in their worship of the Lord. Parents should point out to their children their need and the way of salvation but wait for God to stir their hearts unto repentance. The parents should pray about each child's future and pray that as a godly child they would grow to fulfill God's purpose.

### **Conclusion**

Without proper teaching of God's word and consistent discipline, the child will persist in his foolish ways. He will assume that he deserves the very best treatment from others; he becomes proud. In order to get what he thinks he should receive, he will fight and argue. He disregards authorities and is only focused on himself. Because of this, he will be a threat to the society and will face grievous consequences and without change he faces jail and even early death, and this is exactly what Nigeria is today. So sad!

## **INTERESTING FACTS**

1. The 10 commandments had writing on both sides (**Ex 32:15**).
2. Goliath's armor weighed 125 pounds (**1 Sam 17:5**).
3. The Levites could not serve in the Tabernacle until 25 years old and had to retire at age 50 (**Num 8:24-25**).
4. Paul was guarded by 470 soldiers when He was taken to Governor Felix (**Acts 23:23**).
5. Andrew was a disciple of John The Baptist before becoming Jesus' disciple (**Jn 1:35-37,40**).
6. The only miracle of Jesus that is mentioned in all 4 Gospels is when He fed the 5000 (**Mt 14:13-21**)(**Mk 6:32-44**)(**Lk 9:12-17**)(**Jn 6:1-14**).
7. Psalm 111 is an example of an acrostic psalm. Each line begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet from beginning to end (22 letters).  
Other examples of acrostics can be found in Psalms 9,10,25,34,37,112,119,145.
8. Standing near the cross as Jesus was dying were 4 women; 3 of them were named Mary (**Jn 19:25**).
9. The Bible says to "wait on God" over 40 times.
10. Men first began to "call upon the name of the Lord" in Gen 4:26.
11. The shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35 – "Jesus wept".
12. God miraculously caused the sun to stand still in the sky, providing light for 24 hours straight (**Josh 10:12-14**).
13. The book of John contains no parables.
14. The Levites had to tithe on the tithes that were given to them (**Num 18:25-26**).

# SALVATION

## Limited Atonement: Did Jesus Die For The World Or For A Selected Few?

By David Olajire | Ekiti, Nigeria

This false doctrine of Limited Atonement makes it hard for anyone to be sure of his salvation. For how can one be sure he is saved when he does not know if the blood of Jesus was for him or if he is among the selected few?

The L in the Calvinist's TULIP stands for Limited Atonement and it states that Christ's death or blood is not for everyone but only for a selected few who have been predestined. Calvinist asserts that though the blood of Jesus could be sufficient for all, God has not made it available to all, except to those who have been unconditionally elected. This means that even if a man should wish to be saved, he cannot be saved except he is among the selected ones and this is because the blood of Jesus cannot be effective for him since he was not included in God's plan.

This teaching is an outgrowth of Unconditional Election/predestination. If it can be proven that the doctrine of Unconditional Election is false, this doctrine will not survive a second. Before we go on to see if the death of Christ is for the whole world or for a selected few, it is important to state that the Bible does not teach that God has selected some persons for salvation. Rather, the Bible teaches that God has predestined a plan of salvation which is Christ and all who follow Him will be saved (Eph 1:5, John 3:16, John 1:29, 1 John 4:14).

Regarding the doctrine of Limited Atonement (the doctrine that Christ's death is not for everyone but for a selected few), the Bible teaches that;

**1. Christ's Death Is For All:** Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9). He came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), and the whole world which includes all people

are lost because of sin (Isaiah 53:6). Sin came as a result of one man for by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. This justification is for all men and not for a selected few just like judgment came upon all by the offence of one (Rom. 3:23). If anyone should imagine that Christ did not die for all, such a person must also prove that all men have not sinned (Rom 5:12, Rom 3:23). Christ's death was to draw all men to himself, not some (John 12:32). However, one may wonder why all men are not saved? Why are all men not drawn to him if His death is truly for all men? All men are not drawn to Him because all do not obey (Rom 10:13,16). He is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe (1 Tim 4:10). This means that only those that believe will be saved even though God wants all men saved and for this reason He sent Jesus who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Tim. 2:6).

**2. God Includes All Men In His Plan Of Salvation:** "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). God's love was not for some certain people but for everyone, for the whole world. God is not partial and does not show favouritism. Therefore He planned to save all men (1 Tim 2:4) even though no man was worthy of it (Rom 5:7-8). God displayed His love for the world because He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live (Ezek. 33:11). The death of Jesus is





for the salvation of man and God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4).

**3. A Man Can Be Sure Of His Salvation:** This false doctrine of Limited Atonement makes it hard for anyone to be sure of his salvation. For how can one be sure he is saved when he does not know if the blood of Jesus was for him or if he is among the selected few? If such doctrine be true, it means all men are in jeopardy. It means all men who claim to be Christians are confused beings. It means Christianity is sham. You cannot boast of what you do not know. Who knows the selected few? Can a man boast he is among the selected few? No! In contrast, the Bible makes it clear that one can be very sure of his salvation. Paul was sure of his salvation (2 Tim 4:6-8). Peter, Stephen, James etc. were all sure of their salvation that they were willing to die for it. Why were they so sure they were saved? It is because they knew God wants all men to be saved and that Christ died for all men and anyone who believes in him will be saved (Heb 5:9, Mark 16:16, Rom 1:16). Since they believed and followed him, they knew they were saved.

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is false and unscriptural as we have seen from the points given. Nevertheless, those who hold on to this doctrine have some proof text for it. We should consider the Bible passages often used by the adherents of this doctrine and see if they support the doctrine.

Matthew 1:21: **And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins.** This passage is used too often to prove that Christ came only to save his people from their sins, but what those who use this passage fail to do is to be sincere about who His people are. His people in this passage can mean only two things, either the whole world or only the children of Israel. If it is only the children of Israel, it

means no Gentiles can be saved and this is not true (Acts 28:28). Since it cannot mean only the Israelites, it must mean the whole world. This means God did not make the blood of Christ available only for a selected few but for everyone. Therefore this passage does not support their doctrine in anyway. For Christ came to save the world (John 1:29), not part of the world.

Matthew 26:28: **For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.** This passage is used to prove that Jesus said His blood is for the remission of the sins of many, not all. Truly Jesus said His blood is for the remission of the sins of many but He never said His blood is not meant for the world. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. What then does the “many” in this passage means? It means, inasmuch as the blood of Jesus is for all, not all will obey him and those who do not obey him will not have their sins remitted not because it is not meant for them but because they have chosen to disobey (Heb. 5:8). This is exactly what John and Paul explained when they said "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2) especially of those that believe (1 Tim 4:10). Christ's blood is for everyone but not everyone will have their sins remitted because not everyone will believe. To believe, repent and be baptized is prerequisite to have one's sins remitted (Acts 2:39).

Acts 20:28: **Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.** This passage is used to prove that Christ died only for the church. Yes it is true that Christ died only for the church but who makes up the



church? The church is made up of those who have gladly received the word of God and have been baptized; "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:41, 47). This means anyone who gladly receives the word of God and become baptized will be added to the church because he has been cleansed by the blood of Christ (Acts 2:38). The church is made up of the saved and salvation is for all men (Titus 2:11).

**Conclusion:**

The false teaching that Christ's death is only for a selected few is a teaching that betrays everything about the Bible for the whole Bible is about the plan of God to save the whole world. God wants to unite all men to Himself (1 Tim 2:4, 2 Pet. 3:9) but the Calvinist doctrine of Limited Atonement is against this. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ's death is for all men, however, not all will be saved because many will not believe in him "for as many who believe in Him He gave power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12).

**Lessons for Moses**

It took God forty years to shape a grown man,  
 He did not compromise His work, and altered not His plan.  
 The vessel that He planned to change had known wealth and power,  
 Sequestered in the wilderness, relied on God each hour.  
 The choices that were once his own no longer held their sway,  
 T'was God who held the upper hand and He would

have His way.  
 He knew he'd come full circle from poverty to fame,  
 From floating in a basket to having royal claim.  
 A cradle in the water to a bed of feathery ease,  
 From the muddy Nile River to servants at his knees.  
 Then forced into the desert because of violent crime,  
 Alone, almost deserted, with nothing left but time.  
 Reduced to a mere mortal, no slaves at his command,  
 The big, blue sky above him, his feet on desert sand.  
 With God his lone companion, with sheep that he must tend,  
 No luxuries that pampered, no boisterous royal friend.  
 Twas there God taught him patience to hear His loving voice,  
 Twas there God gave instructions, 'twas there he made his choice.  
 In fear and trepidation, no longer filled with pride,  
 Accepted his assignment, with only God as his guide.  
 His wandering days were over, God's people must be freed,  
 The Egyptian rule was over - that's what God had decreed.  
 The obstacles were many, the challenges severe,  
 But faith brought strong persistence and helped destroy the fear.  
 Eventually they conquered, the Jews were finally free,  
 Moses, God and Aaron would claim the victory!  
 Obedience is the answer, God settles for no less,  
 The road may not be easy, the journey filled with stress.  
 But always He's the victor, endurance is the clue:  
 Like Moses, learn your lesson - God has a plan for you.  
 By Greta Zwaan, 2009

# SALVATION

## Evangelism: What, Why, Who, Where, How and When?

By O.S. Asaolu, Ph.D | Lagos, Nigeria

Each individual Christian kit in the whole armor of God has a responsibility to help communicate the good news unto others, in one way or another. So count your blessings, if lackadaisical repent of it and say:

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” –Ps 51:12-13

### Introduction

This lesson is a brief touching on the subject of Evangelism in its various ramifications. It is a study material for individuals and churches to help us become good “fishers of men.”

### WHAT

Evangelism is “The preaching of the good news” or proclamation/herald of the gospel of Christ. The gospel is the message of;

- The life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ -1 Cor. 15:1-4
- His present reign over the kingdom of God [church and the universe] Act 8:5,12, Heb 1:1-3, Eph 1:1-23.

The object of evangelism is converting people to Jesus. Whether people are converted or not, we evangelize via preaching. One plants the seed (word), another waters while God gives the increase -1 Cor. 3:5-8, Luke 8:4-15.

### WHY

The reason for evangelism is to save sinners which is essentially adult mankind (Rm. 3:23). Recall

- Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and has not abandoned that goal.
- Mankind need to be saved from their sins (Mt 1:21), the fear of death, the power of the grave (Heb 2:9,14-15) and the wrath of God (Jn. 3:16-17,36).
- Humans need to be reconciled with God after the fall

in Eden, the restored fellowship is what Christians enjoy (Col 1:20-22), being the ones having all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3-7) who worship God in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23-24, Phil 3:3).

- Christ will return to judge the living and the dead Acts 10:42; 17:31, 2 Tim 4:1.

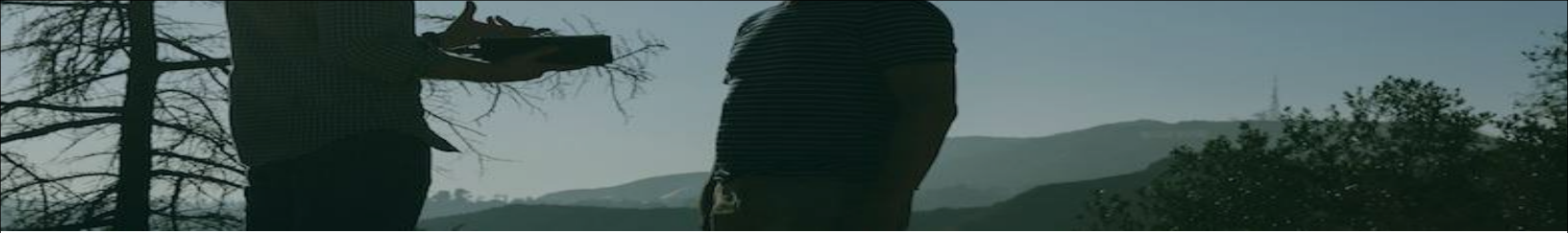
### WHO

Disciples of Christ are to evangelize, individually and as a church. Scripture authorizes both to preach since:

- Those who encountered Jesus invited others unto Jesus –Jn. 1:40-46; 4:25-30,39-42.
- During His ministry, Christ selected followers for limited commission -Mt 10:5-14, Lk 10:1-17.
- After resurrection, Jesus gave the Great Commission to the apostles –Mt 28:16-20, Acts 1:2-8; 26:9-18.
- Later, individual Christians upon dispersion caused by persecution, preached on their own –Acts 8:3-4.
- The church is charged to evangelize and does (Eph 6:10,15 & 1 Thess. 1:6-8) through its ministers known as Evangelists (and Teachers) –Rm. 10:11-15, Acts 13:1-3.

[Note: In the church, every saint is not a teacher or a preacher (James 3:1, 1 Cor. 9:14, Eph 4:7-12).

The church sending out everyone to preach is unscriptural. Babies or new converts have to be groomed in-house first and only selected mature ones dispatched as the church's representatives to preach.



Christians are the Lord's troops and we seek to win subjects to Christ's territory from the kingdom of darkness. Special forces are sent for missions; not every soldier goes to the warfront at any instant, some stay back at the base to manage or support the effort. For more information on Preachers, see [http://www.lainosint.com/download/faith/On\\_The\\_Acquirement\\_And\\_Recognition\\_Of\\_Evangelists.pdf](http://www.lainosint.com/download/faith/On_The_Acquirement_And_Recognition_Of_Evangelists.pdf)

Also, writing other churches to come out or join a “mega-evangelism” project is unscriptural. Each church should labour according to its capacity but can invite or support many preachers concurrently. How should congregations relate on preaching? See [http://www.lainosint.com/download/faith/Church\\_Cooperation\\_in\\_Evangelism\\_by\\_Lesley.pdf](http://www.lainosint.com/download/faith/Church_Cooperation_in_Evangelism_by_Lesley.pdf)

## WHERE

In the whole world, unto every creature (Mk 16:15-16) wherever humanity is found. The gospel is for all irrespective of social status. In Paul's era they accomplished that (Col 1:23) and we should in our own period.

## HOW

For this all-important work, the church must plan and strategize as well as count the cost. We should use our individual talents and contribute time, resources etc. Since the message is to the lost – atheists (who do not acknowledge God's existence), unbelievers (e.g. Satanists, Traditional Religionists, Muslims, etc. who misconstrue Jesus) and denominations (believers who are in religious error), use a suitable method for each:

- **Atheists:** use apologetics. Start from nature that design evident in universe implies creation, natural laws implies a lawgiver the source of morality, evidence that universe is winding down, etc. + Scripture.

- **Unbelievers:** Use normal-evangelism (start with what they know and are comfortable e.g. Acts 17:18-34, show areas of agreement from their books/scripture and throw more light from the Bible)

- **Denominations:** Use proselytism as with the Ethiopian Eunuch or Apollos. Let such try to explain a passage s/he believes then step in privately to correct. E.g. when someone says he is saved, commend that and ask such to kindly share how he became a Christian, otherwise you may ask if he is satisfied with everything about how his group worships and is organized or if there are areas improvements are needed. While he relates this, you could request for Bible authorization of his claims and then clarify issues as he tries to explain say, “the sinner's prayer, the name of the church he attends, etc.”

Preach in word (verbal & writing - 2 Cor. 10:11) and in conduct (Mt 5:16, 1 Pet 3:1, 1 Timothy 4:12). We can use various means to go into the whole world to preach as well as invite the sinners to come. Use:

- A simple invitation to the home, to meet a teacher or to regular church services and special programs.
- Correspondence, Tracts, TV, Radio, CD. Internet & Social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.)

**Face to face contact is important to clarify things & to administer baptism, to encourage the new born in faith and to begin to teach them to observe all things whatsoever that Christ commanded.**

## WHEN

At all times or seasons irrespective of mood, personal condition or social circumstances - 2 Timothy 4:2. We must convert opportunities, do all things to proclaim the message, chip it in and make known the manifold wisdom of God.

## Conclusion:

Let us spread the good news near, far and abroad. Otherwise, someone might say on judgment day: 'You never mentioned Him to me!' Soul-winning is wise and has a reward –Prov. 11:30, 1 Cor. 3:14.

The obligation is upon the church to train, commission and support Evangelists to preach to the world.

**It is Preachers who could truly proclaim with Paul thus:**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. –Rom. 1:16-18*

*... for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! ... For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. -1 Cor. 9:16b,19-22*

Each individual Christian kit in the whole armor of God has a responsibility to help communicate the good news unto others, in one way or another. So count your blessings, if lackadaisical repent of it and say:

*“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” –Ps 51:12-13*

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<https://www.britannica.com/event/Reformation>

Schofield Martin Luther p. 122

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Question:** Good evening Bro Lesley. I need your contribution to this question or suggestion of a Brother who's against us taking the Lord's Supper during morning service and not in the evening as observed in the Bible.

**Answer:** Thank you for your question.

The New Testament reveals that the Lord's Supper was taken by the early Christians "upon the first day of the week" (**Acts 20:7**). This seems to be the only New Testament example that gives us the time and frequency that the Lord's Supper should be taken.

Since it was observed upon the first day of the week and not upon the first day of the month or year, it means the Lord's Supper was observed every week by the early Christians and such approved example serves as authority for faithful Christians today to observe the Lord's Supper every first day of the week in remembrance of Christ. It is binding!

But notice that nothing was said about the time of the day that the Lord's Supper should be taken in Acts 20:7-11. The exact time of the day is unknown and even if it could be known, it is incidental.

Anyone insisting on a particular time of the day is obligated to show what scripture authorizes such. Would such individual be willing to insist that the church must fix her prayers at 3pm (ninth hour) because there was such example in the New Testament of members of the church going to the temple to pray at that time (cf. **Acts 3:1**)? Or would such insist that because the apostles started speaking in tongues at 9am (third hour) on that Sunday morning (Pentecost Day - **Acts 2:15**), the church today must start their worship at 9am every Sunday? If not, why insist that the church must meet to partake of the Lord's Supper at a particular time of the day when the Lord has not fixed anytime?

In fact, Acts 20:7-11 really does not indicate when the

worship began, nor does it tell emphatically what time of day the Lord's Supper was taken. We are only told that Paul preached until midnight. At what time did Paul start his preaching and at what time exactly the Lord's Supper was taken is not revealed! To insist that because Paul preached until midnight means that the disciples at Troas took the Lord's Supper at night is simply reading into the text and it is an **assumed inference**.

Also notice that the Lord's Supper was taken in an upper room (a three storey building) by the brethren at Troas (**Acts 20:8-9**). Even Jesus ate the Passover at an upper room where He instituted the Communion feast (**Luke 22:12**). Would anyone be willing to bind this too? If not, why not? - **O. Lesley Egharevba**

**Question:** What did Jesus mean when he said if one doesn't become as a little child, he will not enter into the kingdom of heaven?

**Answer:** The disciples came to Jesus and asked "who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus answered in Matthew 18:3 "And said, truly I tell you, unless you turn and become as little children, you will in no way enter into the kingdom of heaven." Jesus here didn't mean that we become little children in all things, but in verse 4 he specifies what he means saying "whoever therefore humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" Jesus' response to the question is inspired by the fact that Children are not given to boastfulness and the desire to glorify themselves above others, they are ready to be taught and instructed by others, they are not malicious or vindictive (**1 Corinthians 14:20**). Jesus teaches us that humility is very important in the lives of Christians and exposed the folly in the question asked by his disciples. (**Romans 12:10, 16**). - **Emmanuel Oluwatoba**

# Addendum

## Asaolu – Obentey Debate

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

On Saturday, April 17, 2021, Brother Olumuyiwa Asaolu met Brother Peters Obentey in a debate on an issue about the Christian faith which was conducted in the hall of the Lagos Island church of Christ. The debate proposition was: “In the first century, regardless of whether Christians in a city met in a single or multiple assemblies, they constituted one church with one common presbytery.” Asaolu affirmed the proposition while Obentey denied it. Each debater had a total of 70 minutes for all of the appearances with the breakdown of the appearances as follows: In the first appearances, Asaolu had 30 minutes to affirm the proposition and Obentey had 30 minutes to deny the proposition. In the second appearances, both debaters had 20 minutes each to respond to the questions and queries posed to each other. Afterwards, each debater had 10 minutes each to give their closing thoughts and finally, 10 minutes was devoted each for both debaters to respond to questions from the audience.

As far as the general tenor of the debate, it was conducted very well. It was both enlightening and edifying to all present. Attitude was good, attendance was fair and conduct was good. There was no character-assassination or anything of the sort upon the part of either disputant which certainly demonstrates that men can meet on the polemic platform and discuss differences without engaging in personalities.

The bone of contention was that Asaolu insists that in any city where there are Christians, all the saints in that city function as one body, they constitute one church and God recognizes them as one church. He believes that once this church ordains elders, the

elders are to serve as overseers over ALL the Christians in that city; and not that each group or congregation in a city will ordain her own elders independent of the other. He believes that autonomy is for the church in the city and not for the various assemblies, congregations or clusters inside the city. Obentey, on the other hand believes in the traditional view that elders should be appointed over each congregation whether or not there are more than one congregation in a city; each assembly or congregation should have its own elders independent of the other.

In his first affirmative speech, Asaolu hinted that there are commands, examples, inferences and expediencies that support his proposition. He said Titus 1:5 contains a direct command for elders to be appointed over cities. He used metonymy and stated that “...city is the actual/literal container of church in earthly organizational structure (**Tit 1:5**) just as cup is the actual/literal container of wine in the Lord's Supper (**1 Cor 10:16**). The entity in which elders should be ordained is “the church in the city” (city-church) NOT a cluster.”

And in showing NT examples of Christians meeting in both multiple and single assemblies which constituted one church and having one common eldership, he mentioned that there are at least three different assemblies that constituted the one Jerusalem church; those who met in the temple (**Acts 2**), those who met in Mary's house (**Acts 12:12**) and those who met elsewhere (**Acts 12:17**). He also mentioned that Laodicea had several assemblies that constituted one church as per Colossians 4:15-16. He sees “the brethren which are in Laodicea” and “the church which is in his house” as two separate groups



that constituted the church of Laodicea. He also sees multiple assemblies in Ephesus with one group meeting in the school of Tyrannus and another in the house of Pricilla and Aquilla. And he mentioned that the church in Troas had a single assembly as per Acts 20:7. He insists that the only time you find “churches” and a named place is usually in reference to regions as per Churches of Macedonia (**II Cor. 8:1**) and Churches of Galatia (**I Cor. 16:1**). He also mentioned that recipient of NT books were either to the church in a city (e.g. Philippi, Ephesus, etc.), churches in a region (**Gal.1:2**) or an individual (Phil. 1) and not one time were letters written to two different assemblies in a city. He mentioned the 7 churches of Revelation 2 and 3 and that the letters were addressed to the church in each city, insisting that there is never a time in the NT where it was recorded that there are “churches” in a city.

In response, Obentey mentioned in his first negative that God is a God of order and pattern and God's design and pattern for the New Testament church is to have elders over each and every assembly or local church as we find done in Acts 14:23. He hinted that the nature of the shepherd's work is to be among the flock as per I Peter 5:1-2 and that elders are expected to be among their flock, not outside and not too far. He said shepherds must know their sheep by name and colour (**John 10:3**); must lead and go before the flock, must watch over the sheep against wolves and lions (**Acts 20:28**); must look after the sheep that is sick (**James 5:14**); discipline the sheep that is stubborn; be an example to the flock; be present to stop the mouth of the gainsayers; and hinted that all these show that elders must be readily available, be around to be seen and be among the flock; not in a city or distance. He posited that multiple assemblies with single eldership will not allow the elders carry out

their role accordingly.

He mentioned that the Jerusalem church worshiped as one single assembly before the persecution as per Acts 2:44-47. He said “breaking bread from house to house” should be understood with the current pattern of zonal weekly house to house fellowship and not multiple assemblies. He said they were together in Solomon's porch as per Acts 5:12-14 and pointed to Acts 15:22 as proof that they were a single assembly since the whole church came together in the consideration of the matter and not a segmentation of different assemblies in different places. He posits that multiple assemblies in Jerusalem were occasioned by the persecution and it was not a divine standard. He read Titus 1:5 from the Amplified Bible (according to him) and showed that Titus is to ordain elders in every assembly in the city. He mentioned that there is no contradiction between Titus 1:5 and Acts 14:23 as there can be many churches or assemblies in every city and each and every assembly should have its own elders.

In the second appearance, Asaolu asked Obentey to show Scriptural evidence of any of the following in order to disprove his proposition: (1) That in every city, the Christians always had a single assembly or (2) Inspired command directing that elders be ordained from house to house; in each place wherein Christians assembled for worship or (3) example of at least one city where saints met in autonomous assemblies and some assemblies actually installed separate presbyteries.

He mentioned that he is in agreement with the duties of the elders as outlined by Obentey and that he is not affirming that elders be appointed over different churches but that elders are appointed over all the saints in a city. He insists that elders are to be





appointed among all the saints in a city and that they are to distribute themselves among all the assemblies in that city and so, he affirms that the local church in the true sense is the city church. He emphasized that persecution has been part of the Christian race and God knows there will be persecution; that if God wanted the Jerusalem church to always stay in just one building or location, He would have required for a temple to be built. He mentioned that the Greek words used in Titus 1:5 is “every city” and not every “churches or assemblies in a city” and insists that if any translation gives a different meaning, then it is an interpretation of the translators. He disagreed with the Amplified version that was used by Obentey and also read from the Amplified version (according to him) showing it does not give such impression of “churches in a city” and refer the audience to Bible Hub to confirm the translation as he reads it. On Acts 14:23, Asaolu mentioned that the elders were appointed over each church in each of the cities mentioned in verses 19-21 and not different churches in one city and he referred to Acts 15:36 & 41 to show that “every city” and “the churches” are used interchangeably. He mentioned that I Peter 5:1-2 meant the elders of the church in every city since the New Testament arrangement is to have a church in each city.

In his second appearance, Obentey mentioned that the background he gave for the functionality of elders in their job description showed that everything that Asaolu is trying to describe is faulty. He said the elders will be ineffective; they cannot work and will never be able to discharge their duties accordingly. He insists multiple assemblies were caused by persecutions and were never the standard. He mentioned that the Ephesians church were never two assemblies as claimed by Asaolu. He said the “brief gathering” that

met in Priscilla and Aquila's house is not different from the people that met in the school of Tyrannus. He said it was the same church that moved from one location to another. He hinted that Paul and Priscilla and Aquila were co-businessmen and co-workers and they could not have worshipped in two separate assemblies. According to him, “the Ephesian church was never officially mentioned to have met in Aquila's house. The first mention of the church in Aquila's house was in Paul's letter to the Romans where he greeted the couples and praised them for their support of him while they were together in Ephesus (Rom. 16:3-4, cf. Acts 18:2, 18), and also greeted the church in their house which was in Rome (Rom. 16:5), and not Ephesus.” He also said that the Corinthian church was a single assembly as well and if at all there was a semblance of house assemblies, they were midweek zonal fellowship as we currently practice today. He showed that the Corinthian church always come together as one and into one place as per I Corinthians 5:4 and 11:17-21. Furthermore, he said that even though Paul's letters were directed to formidable churches like Ephesus, Philippi, Rome, Corinth as well as the letters to the 7 churches in Asia, it does not mean that there were no other churches there. He said they were sampled and these were the major churches there and they were mentioned. Obentey insists that the idea of elders overseeing group of assemblies does not come close to the idea of shepherding. A city, according to him, is too big for an eldership to oversee.

In his concluding statement, Asaolu reaffirmed his proposition and made it clearer as he posits that Obentey seems not to grasp his position very well. He stated that he is not saying the elders of a church should oversee another church but that all the saints in a city constitute one church and they must have a

single eldership and the number of assemblies where the saints meet may be single or multiple. He reaffirmed that there were multiple assemblies at Ephesus and Corinth and cites Acts 20:20 to show that brethren were meeting “publicly” and “from house to house.” He pointed to Romans 16:23 and said that Gaius was hosting the whole church (and since Paul was in Corinth when he wrote to Rome), it means the Corinthian church was meeting in the house of Gaius.

Obentey on the other hand, reiterates that Paul joined Pricilla and Aquila as co-business men in tent making from where Paul supported himself and those with him (Acts 20:34-35). They also travelled together from Corinth to Ephesus as per Acts 18:18-19. When Paul came back to Ephesus in Acts 19, he converted the 12 men and all of them together formed the people that met at the school of Tyrannus. He insists that there was never a formidable church of “Pricilla and Aquila in their house.” He insists shepherding is never done in clusters and that there were no Internet at that time or new media of communication and the mode of communication would not be smooth if the elders are in different assemblies at different times and there was nothing like each clusters reporting to the other. He also said that the early Christians patterned the local church towards the synagogue style or arrangement and the synagogue was always autonomous. And so he concludes that the pattern that is being advocated by Asaolu is inefficient and unworkable and maintains that the current pattern of independent, autonomous congregation is the scriptural pattern.

The following are the links to download the write-ups of both debaters.

[https://lajosint.com/download/faith/City\\_Church\\_Eldership\\_Debate\\_2021\\_Asaolu.pps](https://lajosint.com/download/faith/City_Church_Eldership_Debate_2021_Asaolu.pps)

[https://lajosint.com/download/faith/City\\_Church\\_Eldership\\_Debate\\_2021\\_Obentey.pps](https://lajosint.com/download/faith/City_Church_Eldership_Debate_2021_Obentey.pps)

For a full video of debate, it is available for download at:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/11yaY6pBAPBvxUlaId3dhaOe8PBQhuxs2/view?usp=drive\\_web](https://drive.google.com/file/d/11yaY6pBAPBvxUlaId3dhaOe8PBQhuxs2/view?usp=drive_web)

Readers are encouraged to study them and decide for themselves who is using scriptures and using scriptures well.

**Editors Note:** I have only tried to present the details of the event in the best unbiased way possible without taking sides with any of the debaters. I have refrained from inserting my commentary. Those interested in knowing my view on this debated topic could see my book, “The Church And Human Institutions”

