



UNMASKING SOPHISTRY

A Journal of Christian Evidences and Comparative Religions

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**"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)**



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From The Editor's Desk

This is the sixth edition of Unmasking Sophistry Magazine. It is the third issue in the year 2022. God be praised for the grace He has given to us to continue in this effort. As usual, 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 last edition of this journal, we examined various topics under each of the sections such as: *Pain And Suffering: An Emotional Appeal*; *God's Plan For the Homosexuals*; *The Oneness Doctrine*; *A Discourse on Speaking In Tongues*; *The Great Awakening*; *The Blessings Of Autonomy*; *A Glorious Tongue*; *Home Training*; *Myths Often Told About The Birth Of Christ*; *The Work Of The Holy Spirit In Conversion*; *Matthew 28:19 and the Triune God*; *What Should Christians Celebrate About Christ?*; and a few other good topics. We appreciate all the lovely feedbacks received from our dear readers. Please, we would like to hear more from you.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *Dissolving A Few Oneness Pentecostal Aspirins*; *Wrong Word Invalidates Catholic Baptisms*; *Pouring Water On A Duck's Back*; *A Discourse on The Godhead and Baptismal Formula*; *Jesus Built His Church*; *Jacob Creath Jr.: Willing To Be Ruined*; *The Church And Individual Works*; *Youths, You Too Can Succeed*; *The Doctrine of Rapture*; *Perseverance of the Saints*; *Two Aspects of Sanctification*; *Does Church Really Matter?*; and other interesting topics. The section on "Testimonials" is also retained for this edition.

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

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. We appreciate those who have been expressing their disagreements and we hope that the answers we have been providing from God's word are satisfactory. 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



Dissolving A Few Oneness Pentecostal Aspirins

Osamagbe Lesley EGHAREVBA | Lagos, Nigeria

Those who are insisting that there is a particular set of words that must be pronounced by the baptizer while baptizing an individual, try to give credence to their doctrine by finding solace in the statements of certain "authorities." However, only the Scriptures should be used to justify a practice that is approved by God and not human authorities (Acts 18:28).

This article is intended to debunk and show the ineffectiveness of some arguments used by the advocates of the Oneness doctrine to defend the false doctrine of the baptismal formula. These modern teachers seem to have constructed a "pillbox of aspirins" to be given to likeminded individuals in order to relieve them of the pains and headaches caused by the truth as a result of the false doctrine they expound. The aim of this endeavor is to begin the process of emptying the box and dissolving those aspirins in order to make them ineffective even to those who use them.

Are Quotes From "Authorities" A Proof For The Baptismal Formula?

Those who are insisting that there is a particular set of words that must be pronounced by the baptizer while baptizing an individual, try to give credence to their doctrine by finding solace in the statements of certain "authorities." They cite statements from encyclopedias and other books to give justification to their doctrine. The claim is made that the practice of mentioning "the name of Jesus" by the baptizer dates back to the early church and that the formula was changed to "the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" sometime after the New Testament. Since they cannot justify their claim using the Bible, they must resort to human authorities to defend their practice. However, such argument only lands them into more serious trouble as shall be seen in this piece. It is amazing that those who are using this argument are the same people who affirm that faithful members of

the Lord's church would not insist on a particular formula or set of exact words to be said while baptizing an individual. How upon common reasoning would someone argue that is wrong to insist on a particular formula to be said during baptism, yet at the same time, gives a list of quotations from human authorities showing that "a particular formula" was used from the New Testament times by the baptizers while baptizing.

The Catholics Have Proven Infant Baptism Using Similar Historical Quotes From Authorities

In the first place, it is extremely important to realize that in proving anything to be scriptural, we have to go by the Scriptures, not by men (II Timothy 3:16-17, II Peter 1:3, Galatians 1:11). It would interest readers to know that one of the ways that the Roman Catholic Church have used in proving that infant baptism is scriptural is to give statements from authorities that the practice have been in existence for a very long time. This aspirin has been taken from the Roman Catholic Church's pillbox and placed inside the pillbox of the Oneness doctrine advocates. Here are a few of the quotes that Catholics use to prove infant baptism:

Hippolytus – *"Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them."* – **The Apostolic Tradition 21:16 [A.D. 215]**

Origen – *"according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants"* – **Homilies on Leviticus 8:3 [A.D 248]**



Origen – *“The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants.”* – **Commentaries on Romans 5:9 [A.D. 248]**

Would our “beloved” modern Oneness Pentecostal advocates agree that infant baptism is scriptural since we have statements from “authorities” that the practice has been on as far back to the early centuries? They do not teach this and would not teach it! However, the aspirin that is supposed to cure their headache says we must accept the baptismal formula to be scriptural simply because we find some statements from human authorities that suggest that it has been practiced from the beginning. How weak and poor such argument could be!

Authorities Disagree On What Formula Was Used From The Beginning

It is not enough for the modern Oneness Pentecostal advocates to just go over to the Internet to copy statements from people who believe that the practice of invoking the name of Jesus Christ during baptism dates back to the early church. They ought to be diligent enough to read well and realize that there are other authorities who believe that the “triune” formula was used from the beginning. There are quotes from various Authorities that say the “triune” formula was used at the beginning. Here are a few of them:

Origen – *“the authority and dignity of the Holy Ghost is so great that saving baptism cannot be conferred except by the authority of all the Persons of the most exalted Trinity, that is, through the mention of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost.”* (Treatise De Principiis 801, 3, 2: CBXXII, 50, 5 ff).

Justin Martyr (100–165) – *“In the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus*

Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, [new converts] then receive the washing with water” (First Apology, 61).

Didache (ca. AD 120-150) – *“Concerning baptism, baptize in this way. After you have spoken all these things, ‘baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ in running water”* (7:1). (Everett Ferguson's Early Christians Speak, p.35)

Irenaeus, AD 190 – *“we have received baptism for remission of sins in the name of God the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became incarnate and died and was raised, and in the Holy Spirit of God.”* (Everett Ferguson's Early Christians Speak, p.35)

Tertullian – *“The ‘paths are made straight’ by the washing away of sins, which faith obtains, sealed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”* (David W. Bercot's A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, p.53)

The Apostolic Constitutions – *“After that, either you, the bishop, or a presbyter that is under you, will in the solemn form pronounce over them the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and will dip them in the water.”* (David W. Bercot's A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, p.58)

The Apostolic Constitutions – *“He [Christ] said, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.’ Therefore, O bishop, baptize three times into the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, according to the will of Christ.”* (David W. Bercot's A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, p.58)

St. Justin Martyr (100–165) – *“in order not to remain children of necessity and ignorance, but of free choice and knowledge, the name of God, the Father and Lord of all*



things, in the water is invoked upon him who chooses to be born again and has repented his sins, the one who conducts the baptism pronouncing only this very name. For no one can state the proper name of the ineffable God; but if any one ventured to say that God has a proper name, it would remain incurable madness. (First Apology, 61)

Tertullian – *“After His resurrection He promised to send to His disciples the promised of the Father, and in the end commanded that they baptise into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not into one. For not once, but thrice we are immersed at the mention of the separate names”* (Adv. Prax. 26: CV XLVII, 279, 13 ff),

Tertullian – Elsewhere he says that *“those who are cleansed are made clean, not through the first, nor the second invocation, but except the third invocation be pronounced, one cannot be made clean.”* (81 Horn, in Lev. VII, 4: CBXXIX, 384, 18 f)

Origen (AD 248) – *“legitimate baptism is had only in the name of the Trinity”* (Commentary on Romans 5:8)

Firmilian writes to St. Cyprian that the invocation of the three divine Persons confers the grace of baptism when the baptizer has the true faith. Here again the invocation of the Trinity constitutes the essential words of the sacrament (Leo F. Miller; The Formula of Baptism in the early Church, p.524).

The Acts of Xantippe and Polyxena (AD 250) – *“Then Probus...leapt into the water, saying 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, and everlasting God, let all my sins be taken away by this water.' And Paul said, 'We baptize thee in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Ghost.' After this, he made him to receive the Eucharist of Christ”*

(Acts of Xantippe and Polyxena 21)

Other sources which contain quotes that the “triune” formula has been used from the beginning include; *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, 1972, volume 3, page 177; A Dictionary of the Bible, by John D. Davis, 1969, page 265; An Outline of Church History, by Theodore Huggenvik, 1955, page 56, etc.*

What do all of these prove? Absolutely nothing, except that uninspired “authorities” disagree, and that you cannot prove anything by them anyway. Only the Scriptures should be used to justify a practice that is approved by God and not human authorities (Acts 18:28).

Has God Given Any Formula To Be Used In Baptism?

It is important to state here that the Bible nowhere tells Christians “what to say” while baptizing; and anyone insisting that “this is what you must say” while baptizing anyone, is only adding his own opinion to the scriptures. There is clearly a difference between doing something and saying something. This fact is abundantly established in I Samuel 25:5-9. Furthermore, in Acts 2:14-40, what Peter **said** is recorded in verses 14, 38 and 40; but it is not recorded what was said by Peter when the baptizing took place in verse 41. In Acts 19:2-5, what Paul **said** is recorded in verses 2, 3 and 4 (notice the quotation marks in the NKJV in verses 2, 3 and 4 but none in verse 5) but there is no record of what was said by Paul when he baptized the Ephesians neither is it recorded what the baptizer said **anywhere** else in the Bible.

Up till now, no one has been able to tell us HOW the penitents were to “repent...in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38); did someone have to call over the name of Jesus Christ over the one that is repenting? Also, no one has been able to tell us HOW David's



young men went to Carmel “in the name of David;” did someone have to call the name of David over the young men while they were travelling? Or did the young men have to call the name of David over themselves while on their journey? Some have refused to understand the essence of citing I Samuel 25:5-9 and were proving what is not necessary. Whether or not David's name was mentioned by the young men when they got to Nabal's house is **NOT** the issue since David specifically told them what to say and part of what they are to say is to mention his name (vs.8). Did Jesus ask us to mention a particular (single) phrase or name while baptizing? No! The point from I Samuel 25 is that it shows a difference between what to do and what to say.

Some think that because Peter mentioned the name of Jesus while healing the lame man in Acts 3:6 (cf. Acts 4:10), then doing something in the name of someone must mean that you have to mention the name of that individual while doing the very thing. They are miserably mistaken and other passages expose their error. In Acts 9, Peter went to Joppa and raised Dorcas to life. He simply said to her, “Tabitha, arise” (vs. 40)—without the use of any formula. Paul healed the lame man in Lystra by simply saying, “Stand upright on your feet.” The man “leaped up and began to walk” (Acts 14:10). These passages clearly show that it was possible to heal or perform a miracle “in the name of Jesus Christ” without actually using this phrase as a technical formula to be stated at the time of the healing or other miracle (cf. Mark 16:17). Similarly, it is possible to carry out a scriptural baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” without the use of any particular formula that must include the name of “the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Other uses of the phrase, “*in the name of,*” would also lead us to understand that this must not be audibly

stated when carrying out the instruction attached to it. Jesus said, “Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me” (Luke 9:48a). Does this mean that one must say, “*I receive you in Jesus' name*”? In Matthew 10:41-42, the disciples are to “receive” or “welcome” a prophet in the name of a prophet. Also, one is to receive a righteous man “in the name of a righteous man.” Does that mean that when receiving a prophet, one has to say “*I receive you in your name*”? Not at all! And in Matthew 18:20, two or three are to gather in Christ's name. Does that mean anytime Christians gather (say to exercise discipline of a sinful brother), they must audibly repeat the formula, “we have gathered in the name of Jesus Christ” for Christ to be in their midst? In Matthew 7:22, Jesus said; “Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’” Does this mean that those who prophesied necessarily said, “*I now prophesy in the name of Jesus*”? Jesus said, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name” (John 14:26a). Did the Father audibly say, “*I am sending the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus*”? Honestly, the advocates of the Oneness doctrine are terribly confused and they seriously need to be helped!

The Grammar of Matthew 28:19

One of the aspirins in the pill box of the Oneness Pentecostals is the grammatical construction of Matthew 28:19. In fact, that is their major argument and they would not let go of it as it seems their life depends on it. They claim that the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit means the three have one single name simply because the word “name” in that verse is singular and not plural. This claim has been proven to be incorrect and false in several ways in my previous articles and no one has been able to



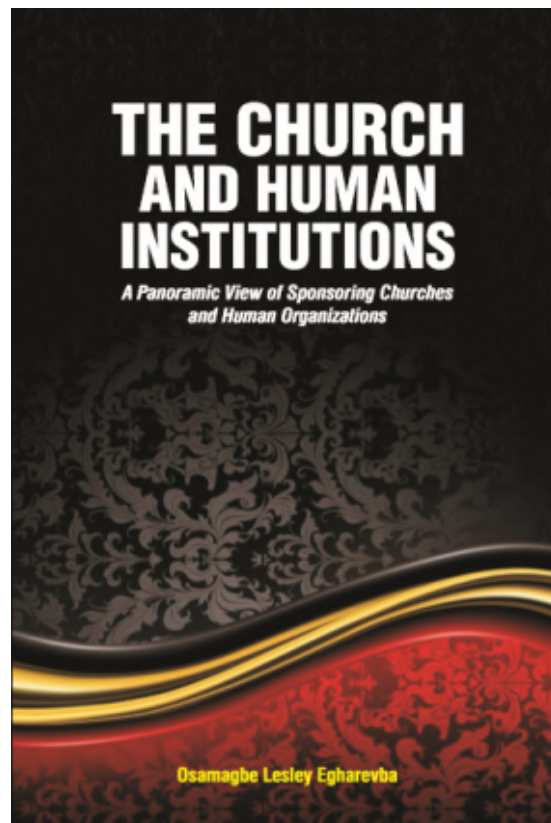
debunk it. All you see are confusing miscalculations intended to deceive (see link at the end of this work). But I want to draw our attention to the book of Isaiah 9:6. In that verse, we read; “*And **His name** will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*” Notice that we have the singular word “name” yet there are up to 4 different terms that the Messiah will be called. Is it grammatically incorrect to have “*His name shall be called...*”? Must it be written that “*His names shall be called...*” for it to be grammatically correct? If our “beloved” Oneness Pentecostal folks can understand that the use of the singular “name” in Isaiah 9:6 in connection with more than one term for the Messiah is acceptable, they should be wise enough to understand that the use of “name” in Matthew 28:19 should NOT necessarily refer to one single name *if at all the name refers to a literal name*. This is especially true since the Bible gives us several other names that Christ is called (Matthew 1:21; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Revelation 19:13; 19:16).

However, it has been severally reiterated that the word “name” in Matthew 28:19 does NOT refer to an actual literal name. We must understand that the term “name” (Greek, *onoma*) must have the significance that it often does in the New Testament. Instead of just referring to a literal name or an appellation, the “name” (*onoma*) can refer to: authority (Acts 4:7; I Corinthians 6:11); reputation (Revelation 3:1; Luke 6:22); person or personality (Acts 1:15; Revelation 3:4), etc. Sadly, some people have decided to be baptized and baptize into a formula instead of being baptized into the union with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. How are they different from the Roman Catholic Church that invalidates thousands of baptisms conducted by a Catholic priest (Father

Andres Arango) in Arizona, USA in February, 2022 simply because he has been using “a wrong word” while baptizing? May God have mercy on these set of individuals and open their eyes quickly before it is too late. Hopefully, we shall continue with the process of dissolving other aspirins at a different time and in different articles.

 To Download My Debate With A Oneness Pentecostal Advocate On The Baptismal Formula, Please Click:

https://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Unmasking_Sophistry_Special_Edition_March_2022.pdf



An invaluable book on the church and Human Institutions. Contact the author at osamagbelesley1@gmail.com to get a copy.



Wrong Word Invalidates Catholic Baptisms

Joe R. Price | Washington, USA

Will the Catholic Church legitimize the other sacraments (like communion and marriage) that they accepted due to these invalid baptisms? It takes more to be a Catholic than it does to be a Christian (Acts 2:41-42, 47).

Catholic priest, Father Andres Arango, resigned from St. Gregory Catholic Church in Phoenix, Arizona, this month (February, 2022 - LE) "after he was found to have [performed baptisms incorrectly](#) throughout his career, rendering the rite invalid for thousands of people" ([kmuw.org](#)). He was off by one word. "During baptisms in both English and Spanish, Arango used the phrase "we baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." He should have said "I baptize," the diocese explained" (Ibid).

The Diocese of Phoenix explained on their website, "The word in question is the use of "we" in place of "I." It is not the community that baptizes a person and incorporates them into the Church of Christ; rather, it is Christ, and Christ alone, who presides at all sacraments; therefore, it is Christ who baptizes. The Baptismal Formula (the words used in the Rite) has always been guarded for this reason: so it is clear that we receive our baptism through Jesus and not the community. If you were baptized using the wrong words, that means your baptism is invalid, and you are not baptized. You will need to be baptized" ([dphx.org](#)).

(1) The Catholic Church makes a person's baptism dependent on a ritual instead of faith. Furthermore, infants are incapable of belief, which invalidates such Catholic baptisms (Mark 16:16).

(2) The Scriptures do not contain a "Baptismal Formula" that legitimizes baptism. Christ authorizes baptism by His word (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:5).

(3) Scripture does not describe baptism as a sacrament or Rite of the Church. Instead, baptism is an act of faith by the person submitting to baptism (Acts 8:36-38; Gal. 3:26-27).

Will the Catholic Church legitimize the other sacraments (like communion and marriage) that they accepted due to these invalid baptisms? It takes more to be a Catholic than it does to be a Christian (Acts 2:41-42, 47).

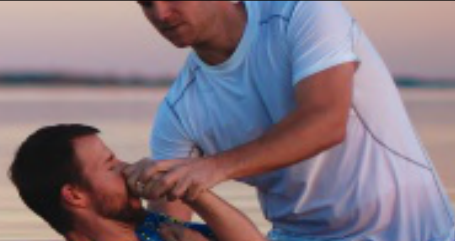
Message from Fr. Andres Arango

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with a heavy heart that I find myself writing this letter of notification to a wonderful parish family that I once served.

It saddens me to learn that I have performed invalid baptisms throughout my ministry as a priest by regularly using an incorrect formula. I deeply regret my error and how this has affected numerous people in your parish and elsewhere. With the help of the Holy Spirit and in communion with the Diocese of Phoenix I will dedicate my energy and full time ministry to help remedy this and heal those affected. In order to do this, I have resigned from my position as pastor of St. Gregory parish in Phoenix effective February 1, 2022.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank God for having given me the opportunity to serve your community so many years ago. You have all enriched my life beyond measure. It has been a blessing and an honor to have served and worked alongside people



that I consider my dear friends and family.

On the [Diocese of Phoenix website](#), there is a [letter from Bishop Olmsted about this and a link to a form](#) where you can provide your name and contact information if you believe you were baptized by me, so that the Diocese can begin the process of baptizing all who are affected.

I sincerely apologize for any inconvenience my actions have caused and genuinely ask for your prayers, forgiveness, and understanding.

Respectfully in Christ,

Fr. Andres Arango

This message from Fr. Andres Arango is available at <https://dphx.org/valid-baptisms/message-from-fr-andres-arango/>

4 Lessons Learned from the Titanic

“God himself could not sink this ship,” replied a deck hand as Sylvia Caldwell marveled at the majesty of the great Titanic and wondered aloud if it really was unsinkable as advertised.

Talk about famous last words!

It was on this day 104 years ago, April 15, 1912, that the “Unsinkable Ship” sank in the icy waters of the North Atlantic after hitting an iceberg late on the 14th. 1517 people died in that disaster.

Caldwell, a second class passenger, on the Titanic's maiden voyage, was one of only 705 people to survive. There are many interesting stories of heroism and unselfish sacrifice of those who lost their lives while trying to save others.

One of the survivors, Ernst Ulrik Persson, by his own account, was pulled into one of the lifeboats by Lady Jacob Astor, the wife of millionaire developer John Jacob Astor — the richest passenger on the ship who did

not survive.

Several lessons come to mind in reflecting on this historic tragedy.

(1) When disaster strikes, everyone is in the same boat. Rich and poor. Young and old. Male and female. First class. Second class. And deck hands. Problems, pain and suffering is no respecter of persons. Death eventually comes to all. The ancient Preacher of Ecclesiastes observed it was so. That was true on that fateful night 104 years ago. It is still true today.

(2) Values are quickly altered in dire circumstances. What was once important is inconsequential. And what once seemed insignificant takes on greater worth. The story is told of a wealthy lady who was in her state room when she heard the orders to abandon ship. There was no time to pack possessions. On her dressing table she saw her jewelry box and a bowl of oranges. She quickly decided that the jewels were “worthless” in this situation, but that the fruit might nourish her on the open sea. Even more valuable is the soul—of greater worth than all the world's riches. (Matt 16:26).

(3) The Titanic reminds us how quickly life can change. One moment we're enjoying pleasure. The next our life hangs in the balance. Our peaceful lives are disturbed by events out of our control. Survivor Eva Hart remembers the night, “I saw all the horror of its sinking, and I heard, even more dreadful, the cries of drowning people.” Truly, James was right, our lives are but “a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (Jas. 4:13).

(4) Man's boasting is vain. Columnist Cal Thomas wrote, “The Titanic was a monument to the glory and presumed omnipotence of human ingenuity, which was also destroyed.” Indeed, “Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov 16:18). The ship once thought virtually unsinkable, sank!

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DISCOURSE

The Scriptures Teach That There Is Only One Person In The Godhead And That Scriptural Baptism Must Be Done Only In The Name of Jesus

Affirmative: James Emmanuel Ojone (church of Christ) | Rivers, Nigeria

Denial: Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba (church of Christ) | Lagos, Nigeria

The above proposition is affirmed by James Emmanuel Ojone (Church of Christ) stating that there is only one person in the Godhead and that a baptizer must mention the name of Jesus Christ while baptizing for a baptism to be valid. O. Lesley Egharevba (Church of Christ) denies the proposition and insists that there are three persons in the Godhead and the scriptures give no exact set of words to be said while baptizing someone.

Affirmative by James Emmanuel Ojone

The God of Israel is a Spirit (John 4:24). A spirit has no form. But whenever God chose to manifest Himself to mankind He does so in His image with which He created man – Gen.1:27.

There are scriptural evidences to prove that the Lord God of Israel is one person (Deut. 6:4). Abraham saw the Lord in the midst of two men in the plain of Mamre and recognised Him as Lord, and also worshiped (Gen.18:1-4, 27). Moses requested to see God's glory and he saw Him in the form of a man, although the Lord revealed His back part and forbade Moses from seeing His face (Exodus 33:18-23).

Micaiah the son of Imla and Isaiah the son of Amoz saw the Lord at separate times as he sat on his throne (1Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1-5; John 12: 38-41). This same Lord which Abraham, Moses, Micaiah and Isaiah saw in glory and interacted with was born in the earth as a child and the scripture said: "**For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord**" (Luke 2:11, 21; Phil. 2:6-8).

However, before the Lord was born, the prophet Isaiah had said: "**For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace**" (Isaiah 9:6).


From this prophecy it was clear that whatever NAME the child bears shall be the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the child was born and his name was called Jesus (Matthew 1:21-23, 25; Luke 2:11,21). What that means is that Jesus is the Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6, 63:16; John 8:19-24,14:8); The Son of God (Luke 1:35, 2:11,21); and also The Holy Spirit – Luke 1:35; John 3:5,6 4:24; 2 Cor.3:17).

Scriptural Baptism Must Be Done Only In The Name Of The Lord Jesus Christ

In Matthew 28:19 the Lord commanded His disciples to baptize disciples in the NAME (singular) OF THE FATHER, and also OF THE SON, and OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, no reason was given. But on the Pentecost day Peter gave two reasons why scriptural baptism should be done in the name of Jesus as;

1. It is for the remission of sins.
2. It is for the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). And from Pentecost onward all baptisms were done in the name of the Lord JESUS CHRIST (Acts 2:38, 8:16-17, 10:48,19:5).

The current practices whereby some gospel preachers due to inadequate knowledge of scriptures quote Jesus directly by saying: **I Baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit** is an affront to the apostles' doctrine. By omitting the



saving name of Jesus Christ in baptism they have short measured the candidates of **remission of sins and the gifts of the Holy Spirit**. It doesn't make any sense to adopt human philosophy outside the apostolic examples.

Beyond baptism in the name of the Lord JESUS, Brother Paul told Colossians to beware that no man spoil them through philosophy to depart from Christ. He commanded them to do all things both in words and in deed in the name of Jesus Christ (Col.3:16-17 Ephesians 5:19-20; Phil. 2:10,11).

By their acts of baptism, the apostles cannot be faulted as some preachers of these days seemed to suggest that the apostles disobeyed a direct command of the Master on baptism. This is not true; Rather, the apostles understood by the Holy Spirit that the name of Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead, (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) bodily. Isaiah 9:6.

If we go by the warning not to add or subtract from the scriptures, no doubt we should be mindful of the commandments of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:2); because they were in a better position to understand the issue of baptism as they were written.

May God help us.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT JESUS?

In Matthew 16: 13-16 Jesus once asked people, "What do you think about the Christ, whose Son is He?" Sadly, there are many people who never think about Christ at all. In youth many are often too preoccupied to think about Jesus. The young often also feel that they'll have plenty of time for Him later. Then in early adulthood, people are often too busy to think about God and His Son. They are concerned about their ambitions, careers, and goals, and they don't think they have time for Him and religion. Then, in the prime of life, many are too worried to give much thought to the Lord. They are so filled with anxiety over life's problems that God is often forgotten. Then when old age comes people may be too hardened to think of Christ. Finally, death comes, and then it is too late to think about Him. But, of course, after death comes ETERNITY-without God and Christ-eternity with FOREVER to think about Christ, and a lifetime of sin committed by IGNORING Him!

Dear readers and friends, I hope you have an interest in the Bible, and in God who gave us the Bible. I dearly hope you will contemplate His great love that He demonstrated in sending Jesus, His Son, to die the cruel death on the cross so that we can be saved (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 8). Jesus said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11: 28). If you believe in Him, and are willing to repent of your sins, (Acts 2: 38) and confess His name, (Rom. 10: 9-10; Acts 8: 37), you can be baptized, washing away your sins (Acts 22: 16). When Jesus died on that cross, He was thinking of you. Think on these things.

-Dennis Abernathy-

DISCOURSE

The Scriptures Teach That There Is Only One Person In The Godhead And That Scriptural Baptism Must Be Done Only In The Name of Jesus

Denial by Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

The above proposition is false and my endeavor is to show the falsity. I shall pay careful attention to the arguments of Brother James Emmanuel Ojone and show why they are false. I wish to state from the outset of this discussion that those who affirm that there is only one person in the Godhead are simply denying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If Jesus is the Son of God, then He cannot be the same Person as His Father. It is sad that folks still deny this especially when the Bible says that only those who abide in the doctrine of Christ will have BOTH the Father and the Son (II John 9).

Brother Ojone said that "there are scriptural evidences to prove that the Lord God of Israel is one person." May I suggest to the readers that this is nothing but a blatant falsehood and a claim that is unproven. The passage that brother Ojone used as a proof text for his claim is Deuteronomy 6:4. Let us examine this passage. It reads; "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" This verse does NOT say that the Lord our God is ONE PERSON and so, implying such is simply reading into the text. Rather, the text says that the Lord is ONE. The Hebrew word translated "one" is "echad" and it can refer to a cardinal number, an order (such as first place), unity, uniqueness or individual parts of a whole (each, every). Particularly, it must be understood that echad can apply to a composite unity. Please pay attention to the following Bible passages as outlined by Hamilton (2005):

Genesis 2:24 - a man and wife become one [echad] flesh. Husband and wife are not ONE PERSON.

Genesis 11:6 - The people were one [echad], so God divided them. They were not ONE PERSON.

Genesis 34:16 - By intermarrying, the Jacob's descendants and the people of Shechem would become one [echad] people. This would not suggest they are ONE SINGLE PERSON.

Exodus 26:6, 11 - fifty clasps are used so that it can become one [echad] tabernacle.

Joshua 9:1-2 - Five nations fought the Israelites as one [echad] army.


Joshua 10:42 - Joshua conquered Canaan in one [echad] stroke, though many battles were fought as listed prior.

Exodus 24:3 - The people answered in one [echad] voice.

II Samuel 2:25 - soldiers gathered into one [echad] unit.

II Chronicles 5:12-13 - The singers sang with one [echad] voice to praise God.

Hence, Deuteronomy 6:4-5 does not rule out a composite unity view of God. Interestingly, there is another Hebrew word, yachiyd, which means "only one" (see Genesis 22:2) and this word was not used in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. In fact, the Jews did not understand the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 to mean that God is one single person. How do we know this? David said in Psalms 110:1; "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." These were TWO individuals and not one. In Daniel 7:13-14 we read; *"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages*



should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed." Here, we have TWO persons; One like the Son of Man referring to Christ and the Ancient of Days referring to God the Father. Thus, when the Bible says God is one, it does not mean that God is one person. This is especially true when one realizes that the Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is a plural noun. In Genesis 1:26-27, we find God saying "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." This confirms the plural nature of the Godhead (other passages include Genesis 3:22; Genesis 11:7; Isaiah 6:8).

The "Oneness" of God is made clearer In John 17:22 when Jesus was praying to the father and He said; "...that they may be one just as We are one." Jesus prayed that His followers are to be one just as He and the Father are one. In what way is the son, Jesus and the Father one? If they are one in person, then it means that all of His disciples are to be one in person in order to be pleasing to Him. But no! Christ's disciples are not one in person; in fact, this is an impossible thing – for all of the disciples to be one single individual. Thus, Jesus was not saying that He and the Father are one single individual. However, how are Christians to be one like Jesus and the Father? We are to be one in faith, doctrine, purpose, aim, practice, etc. as seen in the following passages: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 12:12-20, 25-27; Eph. 4:1-4. So it is not out of place to have God described as "one" yet revealing Himself as three distinct Persons.


In the New Testament, Matthew 3:13-17 is one passage that clearly proves the three Persons in the Godhead. We find that when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended and God spoke from heaven declaring Christ to be His Son. The THREE are here mentioned together as separate individuals. John 1:1

clearly shows that God was with God in the beginning.

Brother Ojone said; "Micaiah the son of Imla and Isaiah the son of Amoz saw the Lord at separate times as He sat on His throne." But we also find several passages telling us that Jesus Christ is seen at the right hand of God. For example, Stephen was one man who saw Christ at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). Other passages are Romans 8:34; Hebrews 12:2; Acts 2:33; Mark 16:19; Colossians 3:1; I Peter 3:22; Hebrews 10:12; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1; Revelation 3:21. While some saw God the Father sitting on His throne, others saw the Son sitting at the right hand of the Father; and so brother Ojone's argument of Micaiah and Isaiah seeing the Lord on His throne, is not a proof that there is only one person in the Godhead. What he had simply done is to focus on passages that talked about the Father and then concludes that is all that is revealed about the Godhead.

The prayer of the church in Acts 4:24-30 clearly shows that the Father and the Son are two different Persons. Ephesians 4:4-6 lists One Spirit, One Lord and One God and Father of all. These three share the same attributes. The Father is God (Ephesians 4:5), the Son is God (John 1:1) and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). These three make up the Godhead. The Bible teaches that God is one; one in essence, one in nature and at the same time, He revealed Himself in three distinct persons. What we find in the Bible is that within the One God, there exist eternally three coequal and coeternal persons – The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

Brother Ojone's argument on Isaiah 9:6 is mere assumption. But even if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit bear same name, would that prove that they are the same person? Not at all! I have seen men who bear



the same name with their father and even grandfather. A woman bears her husband's name when she is married to him but she is still a separate individual from her husband; thus, the single name argument for the three, does not prove anything if at all it is true.

Baptism Only In The Name Of Jesus?

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus says to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Because the word "name" is singular, brother Ojone thinks it must mean one single literal name. This is not true, both grammatically and scripturally. The same Isaiah 9:6 that was cited by him says "...And His name (singular) shall be called..." yet we have up to 5 different names by which the Messiah will be called. If the singular name in Matthew 28:19 means one single name, then the singular name in Isaiah 9:6 MUST mean one single name for Jesus Christ. Also, in Joshua 23:7, we find Joshua telling the children of Israel about other nations and warning them not to make mention "the name of their gods." Would brother Ojone argue that this is referring to one single name for many gods? In Genesis 48:16, Jacob said "the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac". Would brother Ojone argue that it is referring to one single name for Abraham and Isaac? The truth is: the grammatical argument usually made based on the use of singular name in Matthew 28:19 is false and misleadingly. Brother Ojone's statement that the apostles understood that the name of Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead is also false. No Bible passage teaches such!

When the Bible says to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit or in the name of Jesus Christ, it simply refers to the authority and not what to be said at baptism by the baptizer. If it refers to what to be said at baptism, then Matthew 28:19 contradicts Acts 2:38 on what to be said. Not a single New Testament passage tells us what was said at

the point of baptizing an individual and it would be wrong to insist on a particular formula to be said when baptizing a person.

I have addressed this issue extensively in the following links:

Dissolving A Few Oneness Pentecostal Aspirins (YouTube Video): <https://youtu.be/7zgfTt1bgY>

Dissolving A Few Oneness Pentecostal Aspirins (PDF Article):

https://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Dissolving_A_Few_Oneness_Pentecostal_Aspirins.pdf

A Debate on the baptismal formula: https://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Unmasking_Sophistry_Special_Edition_March_2022.pdf

Readers are encouraged to read the articles and watch the videos in the link for further study of the baptismal formula doctrine.

Reference

Hamilton, J. (2005). *Exploring The Nature Of God In The Old Testament*. Retrieved from <https://www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/cms/exploring-the-nature-of-god-in-the-old-testament/>

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.

In January, 2022, the editor of Unmasking Sophistry magazine (O. Lesley Egharevba) engaged in a series of exchanges with a Oneness Pentecostal advocate who is also a professing member of the church of Christ. The topic was on the baptismal formula. During the debate, the Oneness advocate said that "faithful members of the Lord's church do not insist on a particular formula or set of exact words to be said when baptizing anyone." In the same vein, he argues that the Lord revealed a single name to be used in baptism and that the name is "the Lord Jesus Christ." And that except the words "the Lord Jesus Christ" is verbally pronounced by the baptizer during baptism, such baptism would be unacceptable. Lesley responded by showing that "the Lord Jesus Christ" is "a set of words" and a formula; and that contradicts his initial statement about what faithful members of the Lord's church would not do! If he is a faithful member of the Lord's church, then he would not insist on a particular formula to be said at baptism.

Lesley asked the Oneness Pentecostal the question; what is the essence of using one name in baptism? The Oneness Pentecostal advocate responded by saying; "the essence of using one name in baptism is to acknowledge that the Godhead is fully manifest in Christ" and then cited Colossians 1:19 and 2:9 as proof texts. Lesley responded that the two Bible references cited actually say NOTHING about the essence of using one name in baptism.

The same Oneness Pentecostal advocate argues that when Jesus said "all authority has been given to Me", it

means that Christ is the only one with all authority excluding any other. Lesley responded and cited I Corinthians 15:27 to show that when Christ said "all authority is given to Me", it excludes God who gave Him the authority.

The Oneness Pentecostal advocate argues that Jesus is the ONLY Lord God excluding every other (based on KJV rendering of Jude 1:4). Lesley showed that the same Jesus called someone else the ONLY true God in John 17:3.

Lesley made the argument that "even if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have one single name," it does not prove that they are the same person since a wife takes her husband's name yet they are still different persons. The Oneness advocate said that my use of "even if" shows I agree with him that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have one single name. I showed in John 8:13-14 that Jesus used the same words "even if," yet that does not mean He agrees with the Pharisees on what they were talking about. I also gave a quotation from the advocate's published article where he used the same words "even if" yet he does not agree with what he said in connection to that.

More of the Quibbles in Next Edition. To Download The Debate, Click:

https://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Unmasking_Sophistry_Special_Edition_March_2022.pdf

Church History

Jesus Built His Church

Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

A study of church history can be informative, interesting, and encouraging. However, such a study is of little benefit if we forget where it all started. Jesus built His church. In deciding how we will worship and serve God today, it is not enough merely to go back to some previous generation and imitate them. We need to go back to the original and follow the pattern found in the New Testament so that we can be part of the church that Jesus built.

With this article, we are beginning a new series that will continue over the next several issues in which we will be taking a broad look at "church history." We will discuss the changes that took place after the time of the apostles, the rise of the Catholic Church, efforts to *reform* the Catholic Church, and also a movement to *restore* the doctrines and practices found in the New Testament.

A study like this will help us know where we came from and how we got where we are today. It will also help us see the Lord's original plan for His church. In fact, this is where we need to begin. The only way we can properly discuss "church history" is by first understanding that Jesus built His church.

The Promise and Foundation

After Peter confessed his belief that Jesus is "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16), Jesus responded with a promise: "*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it*" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus said He would build His church. The foundation was the identity of Christ Himself – the fact confessed by Peter that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Because this is who Jesus is, He had the right and the ability to build His church. No other foundation would be sufficient for such an institution (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11).

The apostle Paul described the foundation of the

church in this way: "*Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone*" (Ephesians 2:20). Jesus is described as the corner stone because everything in the church must be based upon Him. The foundation includes the apostles and prophets – those who revealed the words of God (Ephesians 3:4-5). They are part of the foundation because everything the church teaches and practices must be based upon the word of God.

The Establishment of the Church

The Lord's church was established on the day of Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus. Beginning on that day, God "*added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47, NKJV). It was started as people responded to Peter's sermon in which he declared "*that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified*" (Acts 2:36). Upon hearing this, the crowd asked what they needed to do. Peter responded, "*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). The response to this was remarkable: "*So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls*" (Acts 2:41). As more people were obeying the gospel in order to be saved from their sins, God continued to add them to the church (Acts 2:47).

It is important that we recognize God's role in the establishment of the church. As we noted above, He was adding people to the church (Acts 2:47). Before Peter and the other apostles began preaching, the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 2:1-4). This was a fulfillment of Jesus' promise to them (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8) and was done so that they would be divinely guided to speak the truth (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). This is significant. It means that the church was not of human origin. Jesus built the church, the Holy Spirit equipped the apostles to open the door to the church, then God the Father added people to the church.

The Spread of the Gospel

Again, from its establishment, God was adding people to the church daily (Acts 2:47). In a short time, there were thousands of people who had obeyed the gospel (Acts 4:4). Not long after this, "*a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem*" (Acts 8:2). This was designed to destroy the church, yet it actually caused the church to spread. Disciples were "*scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria*" and "*those who had been scattered went about preaching the word*" (Acts 8:2, 4).

Some of those who were scattered went to Antioch and preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 11:19-20). It was here in Antioch where "*the disciples were first called Christians*" (Acts 11:26). The church in Antioch helped send Paul to preach the gospel in other places (Acts 13:1-3). Later when Paul was in Ephesus, he preached daily for two years with the result that "*all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord*" (Acts 19:9-10). This shows how much of an impact could be made by just one apostle.

The gospel continued to be spread by Paul, the rest of the apostles, and other Christians as well. The result

was such that Paul was able to write that the gospel "*was proclaimed in all creation under heaven*" (Colossians 1:23), fulfilling the commission Jesus gave to His apostles to "*go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation*" (Mark 16:15).

The Characteristics of Christ's Church

In Paul's travels, he taught the same thing in every place. He told the church in Corinth, "*For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church*" (1 Cor. 4:17). Other preachers in the first century (like Timothy and the other apostles) would also be teaching the same message. Since the church was founded upon Christ and built upon the teaching of the apostles, this should be expected. So, what characteristics of the church do we find in the New Testament? Let us briefly consider these.

• **The work of the church** – In the first century, the church was primarily involved in the works of *evangelism* and *edification*. Evangelism involves the preaching and teaching of the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Edification refers to the building up and strengthening of the members of the church (Ephesians 4:16). At times, churches also did the work of *benevolence* to a *limited* extent – helping Christians who were in need (Acts 4:32-37; 11:29-30).

• **The worship of the church** – In the New Testament, we read that worship included singing (Colossians 3:16), praying (1 Corinthians 14:15), and preaching or teaching (1 Corinthians 14:26). On the first day of the week, churches also gathered together in order to observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26) and take up the collection (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

· **The organization of the church** – Local churches were overseen by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1) who had to meet certain qualifications in order to serve in that role (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). There were also deacons who served under the oversight of the elders (Philippians 1:1). These men had to meet certain qualifications as well (1 Timothy 3:8-13). The New Testament describes no organization larger than or in addition to the local church. Local churches were autonomous and independent as the elders would oversee the flock among them (1 Peter 5:2).

· **The message of the church** – Paul described the church as "*the pillar and support of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15). It sounded forth the truth, the gospel, the word of God. They were not at liberty to deviate from this message in any way (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 9; Revelation 22:18-19). Instead, they were to "*retain the standard of sound words*" (2 Timothy 1:13) which were taught by the apostles.

More could be said on each of those points. However, our purpose here is simply to get a picture of what the church of the first century looked like as the early Christians followed the teaching and guidance of the Spirit-inspired apostles of Christ.

Summary

A study of church history can be informative, interesting, and encouraging. However, such a study is of little benefit if we forget where it all started. Jesus built His church. In deciding how we will worship and serve God today, it is not enough merely to go back to some previous generation and imitate them. We need to go back to the original and follow the pattern found in the New Testament so that we can be part of the church that Jesus built.

"Is There Not A Cause?"

And David said, "What have I done now? Is there not a cause?" (1 Samuel 17:29, NKJV)

The giant's incredible size loomed over the valley as he hurled his insults toward the armies of Israel. He was a champion among the Philistine warriors, and everyone knew why: he was huge! Several feet taller than the average man, no one could hope to survive hand-to-hand combat with Goliath of Gath. No one, that is, except a youngster named David. Armed with faith in God, David displayed remarkable courage as he first challenged and then defeated the giant. His confrontation with Goliath is an impressive display of faith, courage, conviction, and the victory God gives those who rely on Him (read 1 Samuel 17). David's brothers scolded him for talking about doing battle against the giant. His response, "Is there not a cause?" resounds today (1 Sam. 17:29). Enemies to the faith exist, the cause for battle remains (2 Cor. 10:3-6).

(1) False doctrine is a mighty giant we must battle. Contending for the faith is not fashionable to many Christians, yet the cause exists (Jude 3-4).

(2) Worldliness is a formidable giant we must battle. Every day, the world defies the armies of the living God (1 John 2:15-17).

(3) Complacency is a dangerous giant we must battle. Apathy is an intimidating opponent we must slay with fervent zeal to do the will of Christ (Heb. 6:11; Rom. 12:11).

Faith overcomes evil giants that oppose the living God (1 John 5:4). Christians must fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). Take up the whole armor of God and trust God's victory through the power of Christ (Eph. 6:10-13, 17). Soldiers of Christ, arise. The cause is great, but our God is greater (Rom. 8:37).

By Joe R. Price

TESTIMONIALS

What People Say About Unmasking Sophistry Magazine And Other Publications Of Ours

The following were some of the comments received on Unmasking Sophistry Special Edition as well as the newly released video on Dissolving A Few Oneness Pentecostal Aspirins. Due to the limited time frame, we were unable to request for permission from those who made the statements to give their consent for us to publish their statements. Hence, we are publishing the statements without the names of the individuals but only their country.

I have listened to your video yesterday from A to Z. You really did a good job exposing their errors. You dissolved their Aspirins as you have carefully put it. God continues to bless your knowledge of His words.

- Comment from a brother in Nigeria

Well done dear brother for your response to Asaolu on Truine nature of God. May God continue to bless your efforts in Jesus name. The more I study his compiled pdf discovering loopholes and compare with your response, they are wonderful responses. The responses are surely hard on it he never expected such strong responses.

- Comment from a preacher in Nigeria

Hello brother, I wanted to let you know that I watched your latest video. I appreciate your willingness to defend the truth and expose the error that is being spread by false teachers. Hopefully the illustration you used with the aspirins will grab people's attention or make them remember your lesson. Sometimes it helps to use a clever idea or phrase like that. I also finished reading through this exchange. Keep up the good work!

- Comment from a preacher in Kentucky, USA

I like your video on Dissolving A Few Oneness Pentecostal Aspirins. Everything in the video was necessary for it to make sense. You spoke the truth. Their pain will never cease if they do not change.

- Comment from a sister in Holland

I watched your video. Excellent video. I like how you broke down the flaws in their invalidating of baptisms. We need more technical teaching like that.

- Comment from a brother in Texas, USA

Thank you refuting this false doctrine. I like your parallel between the Catholic priest who got in trouble for not using an exact formula created by human tradition, & the equally false claim of people who insist there is such a formula given in Scripture.

Comment from a preacher in Kentucky, USA

Thanks for sharing! You have given an excellent lesson. Have you ever heard of a preacher named Gino N. Jennings. He is an American Oneness Pentecostal pastor who is best known as being the founder and current leader of the First Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It would be good if you ever challenge him to study your lesson. God is good. Love you.

- Comment from a preacher in Washington, USA

Well done Brother Lesley. I liked the hymn at the opening, Your video presentation is improving. This was a powerful Bible lesson and I pray that the hearers are truth seekers; especially those of the Catholic and Pentecostal faith. Every truth seeker should humble themselves and surrender any position if it's false. (Proverbs 23:23). God bless you on your zeal to preach His message!

-Comment from a brother in Texas, USA

BARBS WITH A POINT

Jacob Creath, Jr.: Willing to Be Ruined

Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

Jacob Creath, Jr. (1799-1886) was one of many preachers in the nineteenth century who began to question the commonly held doctrines among the denominations of which they were a part. Creath had been associated with the Baptists. In 1826, he received a letter of commendation from the Baptist Church in Great Crossings, Scott County, Kentucky in which he was called a "beloved brother," a "faithful minister," and one who "earnestly and zealously contends for 'the faith once delivered to the saints'" (*Memoir of Jacob Creath, Jr.*, p. 24-25). However, in 1829, Creath received another letter from this same congregation, requesting that he address reports of the "heresy" that he was preaching.

"DEAR BROTHER — I send you the request of the greatest portion of the Crossing Church. Their desire is, that you will give your views of man as a sinner, and how the change takes place, so as to constitute him born again. Or, in our familiar way, as Baptists, we want your views of *experimental religion*; how a sinner is brought from a state of enmity against the Saviour to be a lover and worshiper of Him.

"This request has grown partly from reports, and partly from a number of brethren, who have heard you preach since your return from the South, conceiving that you had abandoned your old mode and views of preaching, under which their hearts were many times gladdened, and have sat under your ministry with great delight; and we would ask our divine Master to grant you his Spirit, that you may rightly divide the word of truth, giving saint and sinner 'his portion in due season.'" (*Ibid.*, p. 29)

When Creath's uncle, Jacob Creath, Sr., heard of the letter, he paid a visit to discuss it and see how the younger Creath intended to respond. Both men were connected to the Baptist Association at that time; and while Creath's uncle agreed with him on this matter, he wanted to be more cautious in dealing with the issue. When he heard what his nephew planned to reply, the elder Creath said "it would ruin our cause." The younger Creath answered, "What I had said was true; and if truth ruined us, I was willing to be ruined" (*Ibid.*, p. 30).

Creath summarized the point of contention with the Baptists:

"The main item in the indictment was, 'a denial of the direct operation of the Spirit of God upon the sinner's heart, previous to the exercise of faith upon his part, in order to produce faith.' I took the ground, then, that 'the word of God is the grand instrumentality by which the hearts of sinners are changed; and that when the evidence of our Saviour's Messiahship or Divinity is fully set forth, the human mind finds no difficulty in believing it, as it believes any other well-sustained proposition, either in morals or mathematics. And if something has to be added to this evidence, beyond our own resources, before we can believe and obey, we are nearly in the condition that we would have been in if God had not spoken to us at all.'" (*Ibid.*, p. 30).

Though the Baptists with whom he was previously associated would want to label Creath's position as "heresy," his contention that the word of God was the instrument that would change sinners' hearts and produce faith in them was the truth. Paul wrote, "So



faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The apostle told the brethren in Ephesus that "*listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation*" was what led to their belief (Ephesians 1:13). Cornelius was told to send for Peter who would "*speak words to you by which you will be saved*" (Acts 11:14). The gospel is "*the power of God for salvation*" (Romans 1:16); therefore, it is through the word of God that people are turned to the Lord and develop faith.

Once Creath learned the truth on this, he changed his teaching to conform to the message which the apostles taught. He was also willing to face any consequences that would come from this – even the disapproval and withdrawal of fellowship from his brethren in the Baptist church.

Paul was another one who changed his views once he learned the truth and, as a result, fell out of favor with his Jewish brethren and forfeited what he stood to gain had he continued in his previous course. He wrote about this to the brethren in Philippi:

"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8).

It is far more important to be faithful to Christ and to follow His word than it is to gain (or hold on to) anything in this life. Paul was willing to give up prominence in the Jewish community and a place among the rulers. Creath was willing to give up the fellowship and support from the Baptist Association. We may need to give up certain beliefs, practices,

relationships, monetary gain, and more in order to faithfully follow the truth. Yet we must be willing to do this because it is through the "*love of the truth*" that we will "*be saved*" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). We need to have the same attitude as Creath – if truth ruins us, we are willing to be ruined.

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- (3) Why Deny That Jesus Christ Is The Son Of God? (<https://youtu.be/p71VKCs7EPE>)
- (4) Jesus And The Father Are One (<https://youtu.be/8rgslhxnpyg>)
- (5) Matthew 28:19 And The Triune God (<https://youtu.be/jlJC-uDTXaM>)
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- (7) Why Not Tear Off The Old Testament? (<https://youtu.be/C2uk0WWjPVY>)
- (8) How To Identify The One True Church (<https://youtu.be/sNadq-CQ36Y>)
- (9) Is Baptism Essential To Salvation (https://youtu.be/0J3x_TufsTc)
- (10) Practical Christianity: Living Messages From The Book Of James (<https://youtu.be/MoqoQOPUgFk>)
- (11) Why We Should Worship God Rightly (<https://youtu.be/cc4YFTR7eRE>)
- (12) Are We Saved By Faith Only? (https://youtu.be/EubFgFs59_E)
- (13) Will All Good People Be Saved? (<https://youtu.be/VxAuRtVKiAs>)
- (14) Should My Enemy Be Part Of My Prayer Points? (<https://youtu.be/imP5C4pfdTM>)
- (15) Perseverance of the Saints (<https://youtu.be/hnK7VE2pZfc>)
- (16) Does Church Really Matter? (https://youtu.be/5qf6xX_xSY)



Pouring Water On A Duck's Back

Osamagbe Lesley EGHAREVBA | Lagos, Nigeria

As God told Ezekiel, we must continue to preach the truth to the people whether they hear or whether they refuse. They will have no excuse on the last day and they can never be bold to say to you; "You never mentioned Him to me".

To "pour water on a duck's back" is a phrase that is usually used when a person's action is seen as having no effect. The water droplets literally roll off of duck's back when you pour water on it. Thus, one is seen as pouring water on a duck's back if one does or attempts something futile which does not bring physical result. If you have ever observed a duck, you may have noticed that no matter how often the duck dives under the water, it comes back up looking quite dry. This is because of the kind of feathers they have.

One popular American preacher, Barton W. Stone (1772 – 1844) had used this phrase at a point during his lifetime. After preaching the Biblical doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins for some years, he decided to quit and stop preaching it because majority of the people of his time were not accepting the teaching even though what he was teaching is true and scriptural. Frank Richey (2022) gives the narrative thus:

"In 1803, Barton Stone came to the conclusion the necessity of baptism for remission of sins, and he taught it, but over the years quit. The doctrine regained popularity in the late 1820's when a young man named Benjamin Franklin Hall began to teach baptism for remission of sins. In 1826, while traveling through Kentucky, he stopped at the cabin of some friends on Line Creek at Gamaliel, Kentucky. The family was not home, so Hall entered the cabin to wait for their return. While there, he saw a copy of the Campbell-McCalla debate. When he read Campbell's statement about the necessity of baptism for

remission of sins, he immediately determined to preach it. Hall went to see Barton Stone and asked him why he did not preach this doctrine, and Stone replied that he had preached the doctrine twenty-five years before, but stopped because it was like "pouring water on a duck's back." He said the people rejected the doctrine so he quit preaching it."

Here is one man who was so zealous about preaching the truth that he just discovered and here is another individual, an experienced preacher of at least 25 years who had preached this same truth before but decided to dump it since he seems not to be getting the desired result. While it is true that rejecting a preacher and his message could be discouraging, that should not be a reason to stop preaching the truth. God told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2:5-7:

[5] "As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them."

[6] "And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house."

[7] You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious.

It is not the job of gospel preachers to force people to accept the truth. Gospel preachers are simply to speak the true Word of God at all times (II Timothy 4:2) regardless of the opposition and/or the level of



reception of the message by people. We must not make the mistake of thinking that our effort is futile when people do not accept the truth we are proclaiming. This is because Paul said that the labour of those who are always abounding in the work of the Lord is not in vain (I Corinthians 15:58). As God told Ezekiel, we must continue to preach the truth to the people whether they hear or whether they refuse. They will have no excuse on the last day and they can never be bold to say to you; "You never mentioned Him to me." We must fulfill our obligation and be pleasing to God.

At this point, it is important to commend and emulate the effort of Benjamin Franklin Hall (1803-1873). He was a courageous young man with great zeal to preach the truth and help others receive it. He was able to meet and discuss this issue with Barton Stone and got him back to teaching the truth. Hall was just a young boy of about 23 years in 1826 while Stone was about 54 years of age. What that means is that Stone had been preaching this truth regarding baptism which he now dumps even before Hall was born. Hall was not discouraged neither was Stone too proud to accept correction. In fact, Hall's consistent effort of preaching this truth led to the conversion of many other great men. In the words of Richey (2022):

"Hall, in the same year, made a trip into North Alabama, preaching in Jackson, Madison, and Lauderdale counties. In Lauderdale County he preached a sermon at the church on Cypress Creek. In this sermon he preached baptism for remission of sins. Four young people responded to the sermon. Among them was Tolbert Fanning who became editor of the Gospel Advocate and president of Franklin College where he taught David Lipscomb and T. B. Larimore, one of the most in demand preachers in the last part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth

century. Alan Kendrick was also baptized at this meeting. Kendrick baptized 6,000, including his brother Dr. Carroll Kendrick, who became a preacher and is believed to have baptized about thirty thousand. Perhaps the greatest influence to come from this gospel meeting was from James A. Matthews who was preaching in the area but had not preached baptism for the remission of sins. Upon hearing Hall, Matthews determined to preach this doctrine and wrote Stone in his journal, Christian Messenger, three articles concerning this doctrine, urging Stone to once again teach the necessity of baptism for remission of sins. The articles, titled "The Gospel Plan of Saving Sinners," appeared on pages 125-129, 150-154, and 211-213 of the 1829 Christian Messenger. They advanced simple biblical authority for belief, and repentance and baptism for remission of sins, as opposed to various sectarians. As a result of these articles, Stone once again took the position that baptism was necessary for remission of sins."

For some people, they think that older and more experienced people are better qualified to teach the truth and make converts than younger people but this is not always true. I have heard of congregations that would not allow young people to mount the pulpit simply because they are "young." Some congregations will even refuse to engage a preacher simply because he is "too young;" and most people will look down on the truth simply because the person preaching it is "too young." All of these are wrong mindsets that could be detrimental to anyone who is carried away by them. Truth should always be appreciated regardless of whoever is saying it; and rather than be a discouragement to anyone because of their age, it is best to encourage them to do more wonderful work in the kingdom of God.

INSTITUTIONALISM

The Church And Individual Work

Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

Recognizing the difference between church actions and individual actions is important so that both the church and the individual may carry out their given duty.

The church is made up of individual Christians, and for this very reason separating the work of the individual from the Church has been a source of confusion in the fold. Is there any biblical distinction between the work of the Church and that of individuals? We will address this question in the course of this article.

Meaning Of The Term "Church"

The term "Church" is from the Greek "*ekklesia*" which means "called out." Generally we understand it to mean an assembly of Christians (the called out). In the Bible, the word "Church" is used in two senses.

1. Universal Church: The universal church is the body composed of ALL the saved. There is only ONE CHURCH, when used in this sense. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus Christ made reference to the universal Church when He said "I will build my Church." Also, in Eph. 4:4, the "one body" referred to is the church in its universal sense. In the universal Church, the only functioning part is the individual, and so there is no need for a distinction between individual and church in this sense.

2. Local Church: The local church is a functional body of Christians in a given location (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1). When used in this sense, the word "church" can take a plural form, as in Gal. 1:2 & Romans 16:16. This does not contradict Eph. 4:4. As we see in the Scriptures, there are many local churches in different geographical locations with all its individual members belonging to the one body. When we speak of church work, it is church in its local sense we refer to.

Is There A Difference Between Church And Individual Work?

The Bible indeed teaches that there is a difference between church and individual work in 1 Timothy 5:16: "*If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.*" We see here that the individual may act so that the church will not be charged, giving us a clear idea that there is a distinction between the work of the church and the individual.

Church Work

The church is a Divine institution and like every other institution, it has a work that it must do. One important characteristic of the local church is the work it does. From the Scriptural perspective, the local church has three (3) main work;

1. Edification: Edification means "to build up, to strengthen". When used in reference to church work, it refers to building up spiritually. Paul in Eph. 4:11-16, says that one of the purposes of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is for "**equipping**" or "**perfecting of the saints**" (vs.12). Also, in 1 Cor. 14:26, Paul admonished the Corinthian church to do all things unto edification of the whole congregation.

The local church edifies itself by assembling together to worship (Heb. 10:25; Eph. 5:19), teaching the word (Eph. 4:11, 12, 16, Col. 2:7), love (1 Cor. 8:1; Eph. 4:16; 1 Pet. 4:8-10) and discipline (1 Cor. 5:3-8).

2. Evangelism: Evangelism means "sharing the Good



News about Jesus". In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gives the Great Commission to every Christian, making it a duty of both the church and Christian individual. In 1 Thess. 1:8, we see the church in Thessalonica carrying out this duty by sounding out the word in every place. The local church evangelise by sending out men to preach (Acts 13:1-2) and supporting local workers (2 Cor. 11:7-9; 1 Tim. 1:3; 1 Cor. 9:14).

3. Benevolence: Benevolence means "the act of charitable kindness". In Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37, we see that the church engaged in benevolence towards those that were in need. Also in 1 Tim. 5:16, we see that individuals are to take care of their needy, so that the church may focus on those who are truly in need.

Individual Work

Individual Christians also have responsibilities assigned to them, some of these works are similar to that which is given to the church, however, what differentiates the work of the individual and the church is the mode and scope of execution.

1. Edification: Each Christian has a responsibility to edify others (1 Thess. 5:11; Romans 15:2; Romans 14:19). An individual Christian can edify others through teaching the word, speech (Eph. 4:29), and love (Romans 15:2; 1 Thess. 5:13). Individual Christians therefore have the mandate to edify others (unbelievers included) through their words and actions.

2. Evangelism: Jesus' command in Matt. 28:19-20 is one of the primary responsibilities of a Christian. In Acts 8:4, we see Christians fulfilling this duty even in the face of persecution. Individuals can engage in evangelism on their own as opportunity presents itself (cf. John 1:40-46).

3. Benevolence: The scriptures teach that individuals must show benevolence towards Christians and

unbelievers (1 John 3:17). Gal 6:10 says "therefore as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith". In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, those who are rich are charged to be ready to give and willing to share. Also, Jesus ended his parable of the good Samaritan by saying "go and do likewise" (Luke 10:27). These passages show that it is necessary for a Christian to be benevolent. An individual Christian has the right to choose benevolent acts on which to spend his money; however, the church's benevolence is limited to the needy saints.

4. Other Christian Responsibilities: Individual Christians have other responsibilities that they do not share with the church. The individual Christian has responsibilities in relation to the home (1 Pet. 3:1-7; Eph. 6:1-4), the Government (Rom. 13:1-8; 1 Pet 2:13-17), the community (1 Pet. 2:12; Col. 4:5) and the local church itself (Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 11:29).

An Individual Christian may engage in a wide array of social, political and economic activities as long as it does not violate the will of God but the church is not afforded such luxury. It is important to understand that the liberty given to the individual does not mean that this same liberty is given to the local church, and that the limitations placed on the responsibilities of the local church does not necessarily apply to the individual Christian.

Conclusion

Recognizing the difference between church actions and individual actions is important so that both the church and the individual may carry out their given duty. It is my earnest prayer that we continue to do the work that God has appointed us according to His will, so that we will receive our rewards, in Jesus name, Amen.

MYTH BUSTER

Rapture

Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

It is true that when Christ returns there will be a separation of believers from unbelievers (John 5:28-29), however, the rapture ideology that believers will be taken while others will be left behind to suffer tribulation is simply not supported by any passage of the scriptures.

The doctrine of rapture is quite popular today. This doctrine which was first propounded by John Darby in the 19th century was picked up by the Scofield reference Bible, which increased the popularity of the belief. Popular writers have also written books and novel espousing this view. There are best seller books like "*Late Great Planet Earth*" and its sequels, "*The Left Behind*" series and movies which has been created on the premise of these books.

According to this doctrine, there will be an event where the believers/righteous will be secretly snatched away from the earth leaving the unbelievers/sinners on the earth to face tribulation before the final return of Christ. This view is indeed popular, with a lot of people unconsciously absorbing the idea. We will examine the passages of the scriptures which have been used to support this doctrine with the aim of determining if this doctrine is true or not.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 "*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from the heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*" The proponents of this view interpret these events which

Apostle Paul describes to mean "rapture", however, there is no ground for seeing a distinct event from the Second Coming of Christ. The arguments based on this passage is invalid because the Greek word used for "meeting the lord" is "*apantesis*", and this Greek word is used in Greek literature to give the idea of people of a city going out to meet a dignitary. It does not in any way reflect a selective meeting. What this passage simply describes is that the elect of God will be gathered in the air at His Second Coming. This passage does not in any way refer to secretly snatching out of the world or suggest that the world will continue after these events.

Also, this same event coincides with the resurrection of the dead (1 Thess. 4:14-16). This event signifies the end of the world and judgment as Jesus says in John 5:25-29. Paul corroborates this point in 1 Cor. 15:51-55 when he taught that at Christ's return, it will mean the destruction of death; so the events in 1 Thess. 4 is tied to the resurrection of the dead and destruction of death itself, which is not compatible with the rapture ideology, for the destruction of death would also mean the end of the corruptible world.

Matthew 24 is another passage that is greatly abused by the rapture advocates. In that chapter, Jesus talked about the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming and He did not in any way refer to an event separate from these. It is shocking that one will believe that Jesus is referring to (in verse 40-41) an event different from what He has been talking about the



entire chapter. Also, pay attention to what Jesus says in Matt. 24:37-39, "*But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were in the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them away; so shall also the coming of Son of man be.*" From this passage we see that Jesus draws a parallel between the events of Noah and that of His coming. Jesus' idea was to illustrate the swiftness of the event of His Second Coming without any given sign. In verse 36, Jesus clearly stated that no one knows the day or hour that He will come which implies that He will catch men unawares, just like the flood caught men unawares in the days of Noah. In verse 44, Jesus emphasizes this same point. It is clear that Jesus was not talking about the "rapture" which He did not speak about in this passage.

It is true that when Christ returns there will be a separation of believers from unbelievers (John 5:28-29), however, the rapture ideology that believers will be taken while others will be left behind to suffer tribulation is simply not supported by this or any other passage of the scriptures.

Mark 13:19, 24-27 "*For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be...But in those days, after the tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.*" From

this reading, there is no indication that an elect few will be taken while the rest will be left on earth. There is no reason to conclude that Jesus is talking about a "rapture" event which will precede his coming. In verse 30, Jesus says "*Verily, I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.*" It is clear that Jesus is not talking about an event that will happen in the far future in those verses.

Conclusion

From the examination of the passages used by Rapture advocates, it is clear that these passages do not support this doctrine. May God continue to give us the grace to test all things and hold onto that which is true, Amen.

4 Lessons Learned from the Titanic

continued from page 11

Yet, I remember one boat in history that really was unsinkable. It was the boat on which the apostles were sailing when a ferocious storm arose on the Sea of Galilee. The winds were fierce. The waves were coming into their little craft. They felt like they were going to die. But, Jesus was on that boat. Asleep. But when he was awakened by the frightened fisherman, he calmly stilled the storm with His words, "Peace, be still." (Mark 4:35-41)

What storm are you facing? What wind of adversity is blowing? What challenge that looms large like a 100 iceberg threatens your safety? Jesus can safely navigate your frail vessel across the tempestuous sea of life.

The ships of men can sink. And they will sink. But the one unsinkable ship is the one on which Jesus Christ is the Pilot. Come aboard. Your destination is guaranteed.

—Ken Weliever, *The Preacherman*

IDEAL HOME



Youths: You Too Can Succeed!

Rowland Femi Gbamis | Ontario, Canada

Do you see a man skilled in his work?

He will stand before kings;

He will not stand before obscure men (Prov.22:29 – NASB1995)

The term "youth" has no universal agreed definition; however, without disregarding other definitions, the United Nations defines youth as those within the age perimeter of 15 and 24 years of age.¹ To succeed in life, one must realize that God's fear is paramount because it is the source and fountain of all blessings. The Psalmist says, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart, I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119: 9-11). Joseph, Samson, Daniel, and Timothy confronted challenges in their various dispensations (cf. Dan. 1:8; Gen.39:1-4; Judg. 16:5: 1Tim.4:12-16). Likewise, the youths in this dispensation also confront various challenges. The challenges today ranges from easy addiction to games, alcohol and drugs, sexual immorality, productive waste of time on social media, slothfulness, and the resultant effect is leading to lack of focus and concentration for the youth to become efficient and apply their agility in the right direction of living a purposeful life.

Solomon, the great preacher, notes that "skilled men will stand before kings and not before obscure men" (Prov. 22:29). In other words, hardwork, diligence, and perseverance are essential ingredients of success in life. I hear someone says, "what about prayer?" God has enjoined his children to "pray without ceasing" (1Thess.5:17). Therefore, prayer will not substitute the place of work. God wants his children to be hardworking and productive. Remember, before man

fell in the garden of Eden, Adam was tasked with the duty "To tend and to keep" the garden (Gen.2:15). After man fell in the garden, God said, "...*Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil, you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, till you return to the ground...*" (Gen. 3: 17-19). In other words, before or after the fall, man has always had to work according to God's instruction. Within the limited space available, we will look at the principle of organization, laziness as a destructive element to success, causes of laziness, and parental role as a critical foundational building block.

Lessons From The Ants- Organization

Young people need to learn from the lower creatures. Ants never go hungry. Equally in King's palaces, one can find Spiders (Prov. 30: 25, 28). These two creatures though small, are counted wise and successful. Why? They prepare for and have what they need. Ants do what many other youths cannot do because they have learned organized effort. There is a need to consolidate our energy, resources and time toward what we intend to achieve and through the grace of God, we can succeed (Phl. 4:13). Being organized is vital in every activity of youths or life endeavours. The youth who have not learned how to be organized will waste time getting things done. When you are undecided about what to do as a youth, you will fail to do the right things at the right time and give more precious time to less critical activities (cf.



Act 24:25). Remember, you either follow busy men and sleep indoors, or you follow beggars and sleep outside. The choice is yours!

As a student, you need strategic planning concerning what to study, where, how and when. In selecting a place for personal study, it is best to avoid a place where one will have distractions as much as possible and to use the same safe space all the time as opportunity affords. To succeed, every student needs a timetable for use each day of the week. A common saying is that "he who fails to plan, plans to fail." Therefore, we need planning to be able to succeed in our efforts. To corroborate, apostle Paul told Timothy, an evangelist, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). To be "diligent" is to show care and thoroughness in one's work or duties. In another breath, Paul admonishes Timothy to "give attention, meditate, commit to his ministry" so that his progress can be evident to all (1 Tim. 4: 12-16). In other words, every youth should know that they can succeed as God's children if they do what should be done.

Laziness – A Destructive Element To Success

Laziness is a state of mind that is unwilling to work or use energy. Sometimes, it is not because one cannot execute a project successfully, but unwillingness to exert oneself toward it brings about failure due to indolence. For example, a student who discounts and gives little time for lectures, readings, and revisions for the momentary pleasure of social media, parties, and clubbing cannot be successful in his/her studies. There is a need for self-discipline among the youths as to how much time they spend on social media, wasting their precious and productive resources, all in the name of catching up with life happenings. Listen up! There is an appropriate time for everything under

the sun (Eccl.3:1). Do not waste precious time on things that do not matter. Concentrate your time, energy, and resources on productive activities that will increase the quality of your life. Go for a seminar on entrepreneurship, Bible lectureships, leadership training, take courses online or in-class that can add value to your lives. The Bible says, "A man's gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men" (Prov. 18:16). If you are diligent in what you do, you will see how true this scripture is. Therefore, to conquer laziness, you need to get into the habit of pursuing long-term goals and ensure that they align with your interest and purpose.

Causes Of Laziness

Among many factors, the causes of laziness can range from apathy, a lack of interest in life activities or interactions with others. It makes people feel unmotivated or uninterested in daily tasks. It often affects one's ability to concentrate on readings, keep a job, maintain relationships and enjoy life. Lack of purpose is another reason that makes some youths lazy. As a result, some would replace the will to succeed with experiencing pleasure as escapism. In other words, when one fails to understand the purpose of a mission or why something is done, the fallout will usually be catastrophic, leading to failure and disappointment.

Moreover, youths must avoid the temptation to become idle as it breeds laziness (Prov. 19:15). Do not forget; an idle hand is the devil's workshop. Thus, if you are lazy, others will always control you (Prov.12:24). Laziness wastes one's life and opportunities (Pro.24:30-34). Laziness produces nothing beneficial (Pro.21:25); only productivity brings results. In other words, slothfulness brings about economic stagnation (Pro.6:6-11). To corroborate, Paul admonished the brethren on the



importance of working to cater to the necessities of life's need and curb idleness and godlessness with the following words:

6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread (2 Thess 3: 6-12).

Parental Role – A Critical Foundational Building Block

God said concerning Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19). The way parents bring up their children makes a significant difference in how they behave when they grow up. Unfortunately, many parents are preoccupied with their jobs to the detriment of their children, thereby denying the children of the critical attention they deserve. Discipline, respect and dignity

for labour are fast eroding from the fibre of our homes. Parents must wake up to their God's given responsibility towards their children. Failure to do this will result in punishment from God (cf. 1Sam.2:29; 3:13). One of the best legacies we can bequeath to our children is the legacy of hard work. Children must learn first diligence and hard work from their parents' financial security (Eccl.2:18-19).

Honesty and integrity must be taught and emphasized (Pro.11:3; 10:9; cf. Tit.2:7). God has always intended for man to be engaged in meaningful labour (Gen.2:15; Col 3:23; 1Thess.4:10-11). The Bible is filled with examples of those who worked and were successful. The Bible praised the virtuous woman for her hard work (Pro.31:10-31). Let us not forget that Prophet Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruits (Amos 7:14). When we are introduced to Peter, Andrew, James and John in the gospel of Mark, we find them working (Mk.1:16-20). Apostle Paul also referenced his handy work that helped to support him (Act 18:3; 1 Cor 4:12, 1Thess 2:9; 2Thess.3:8).

Final thought, through the grace of God, as God's children, we can be successful in anything we set out to do, be it in the gospel ministry, academic, secular jobs, or as a trainee. Hence, always remember that the surer way to succeed is to follow in the footsteps of godly men and women who are successful. May the Lord give thee understanding in all things!

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All quotations from the New King James Version of the Bible (NKJV). BibleGateway.com: A searchable online Bible in over 150 versions and 50 languages.

SALVATION

Perseverance of The Saints: Is Once Saved Always Saved?

David Olajire | Lagos, Nigeria

The Bible does not teach that once a man is saved, he will always remain saved. Rather, the Bible teaches that even Christians must continue to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Christians must take earnest heed, lest they fall (Heb. 2:1).

Perseverance of the Saints is also called "once saved, always saved." It means that once a person is saved into the Christian fold, he can never fall away to perish in hell. He will always remain heavenly fit no matter what he does. The doctrine of once saved always saved teaches that it is impossible for a child of God who has been saved to go to hell, even if he commits the worst sins. Certainly, this doctrine of once saved always saved will be embraced by those who love to continue in sin, as it gives comfort to continue in sin. Unfortunately, just like the prophets in the time of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the teachers of this doctrine give hope and comfort where there is none (Jer. 23:17, Ezek. 13:10).

The Bible plainly teaches that once saved is not always saved. In Hebrews 4:2, talking to the Christians, Paul said they should take earnest heed lest they fall away from the faith. Paul was warning Christians and if they refuse to accept his warnings, they most certainly will fall away and be lost. Paul himself said he brought his body under subjection. Why should he bring his body under subjection? Because he does not want to be castaway; he does not want to fall away (1 Cor. 9:27). If truly once saved is always saved, why should Paul be concerned with being a castaway? After all, he was already saved and most of the text used to support the doctrine of once saved always saved was written by Paul. So he should have known better that he can never be lost.

Peter, through inspiration, exhorted the brethren to make their calling and election sure, by following

some steps. He said anyone who fails to do this will be unfruitful and will fall (2 Pet. 1:5-10). The person will fall from the faith and that will not make his calling and election sure. If his calling and election is no more sure, it means he is no more saved. Let us bear in mind that Peter was talking to those who have been called through the gospel. Furthermore, John, in 2 John 1:8, told Christians to be careful lest they lose those things they have worked for. The Bible is very clear, and in no place does it teach that once a man is saved, he will always remain saved.

Let us consider the salient points of Hebrew 6:4-6. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

Those under consideration in the above texts were Christians. They were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift. No man in the universe can disagree that these were Christians. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit and have partaken of it. They have tasted the good Word of God. Perhaps, they were faithful Christians. Yet, they can fall away. This text makes it clear that once saved is not always saved. Jesus, in John 8:31 said, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. Certainly, if anyone discontinue in His word, such a person will no more



be Christ's disciple. If a Christian stop doing what God commands, such Christian has fallen from the faith.

In 2 Peter 3:17, Peter through the Holy Spirit wrote an epistle to warn the Christians so that they would not fall away from their steadfastness. These were Christians and they were steadfast, yet, they have to be careful lest they will fall away and be lost.

Even Jesus made it clear in so many passages of the scriptures that it is possible to fall away after becoming a Christian. He said he will gather out of His kingdom those that offend (Matthew 13:41). Some will come to Him who were his followers yet He will tell them to depart from Him because they practiced iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23).

The Bible not only tells us it is possible to fall away, it also gives us examples of those who fell away; Hymenaeus (1 Timothy 1:20), Alexander (2 Timothy 4:14), Demas (2 Timothy 4:10) and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:17). With all these Bible passages and examples, why would anyone still believe that it is impossible to fall away after being saved? The effect of this erroneous teaching is that it makes people derive pleasure in sin.

Proof Texts Used To Teach The Doctrine Of Once Saved, Always Saved

The teachers of this false doctrine have Bible passages they misinterpret. Let us now look at some of the Bible passages, to see if they really teach that once a man is saved, he can never be lost.

In John 10:27-30, Jesus said "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Fathers hand. I and the

Father are one". Calvinists teach that in this passage Jesus said as long as one is His sheep (born again), he can never perish and will never be lost. The Calvinists fail to recognize that there is a condition attach to being His sheep. And that condition is "hearing and following". If anyone does not hear Christ or follow Him, will he be His Sheep or will he remain His sheep? No. Therefore, if a Christian stops hearing and following Christ, he will be lost.

In John 5:24, Jesus said "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life". The Calvinists interpret this passage to mean that Jesus gives eternal life to anyone immediately such person becomes a Christian and that eternal life is permanent and cannot be revoked. So no matter what he who has received eternal life does on earth, the eternal life remains intact. What they fail to understand is that the eternal life is still a promise. No one has it now. We all hope for it. And we receive it only if we keep "hearing and obeying".

1 Peter 1:3-5 (KJV) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time". The Calvinists, using this passage of the scriptures, teach that an inheritance has been reserved for all Christians in heaven and that the power of God is able to make Christians inherit it. No matter how a Christian lives his life, for God to remain true, he must give the Christian his inheritance. Sadly, the Calvinists fail to see the condition attached to having



the inheritance. The passage says Christians are kept by the power of God through faith. Faith is the condition. And faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). If a Christian stops having faith (hearing and obeying the word of God), he would not inherit that blessed inheritance that has been kept for him.

Conclusion: The Bible does not teach that once a man is saved, he will always remain saved. Rather, the Bible teaches that even Christians must continue to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Christians must take earnest heed, lest they fall (Heb. 2:1). We should be contented with what the Bible teaches. To those who have been led in the errors of Calvinism, God commands that they need to change and neglect such fellowship (Rom. 16:17-18).

In Blindness She Served: A Tribute To Fannie Crosby

The hymnwriter Fanny Crosby gave us more than 6,000 gospel songs. Although blinded by an illness at the age of 6 weeks, she never became bitter. One time a preacher sympathetically remarked, "I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you." She replied quickly, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind?" "Why?" asked the surprised preacher. "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!"

One of Miss Crosby's hymns was so personal that for years she kept it to herself, but one day at a Bible conference in Northfield, Massachusetts, Miss Crosby was asked to give a personal speech. At first she hesitated, then quietly rose and said, "There is one hymn I have written which has never been published. I call it my soul's poem. Sometimes when I am troubled, I repeat it to myself, for it brings

comfort to my heart." She then recited while many wept, "Someday the silver cord will break, and I no more as now shall sing; but oh, the joy when I shall wake within the palace of the King! And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story - saved by Jesus's glorious gospel of grace." At the age of 95, Fanny Crosby passed into eternity. When she was eight years old, she made a decision that would affect her entire life. She wrote:

"Oh, what a happy soul am I
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy,
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind
I cannot, and I won't."

She did not ask God to make her smart, or make a wonderful man fall in love with her, or help her become rich or popular or famous, or for all the clothes she would want, as if it could repay her being blind. She did not even ask for a special task, but she did ask God for a "way to serve Him the best way she could." She did not consider this too much to ask. Doors were opened to her as she was able to attend a fine college for the blind. She met and married a fine man, and was loved so much as a songwriter that on one occasion she was invited to Washington D.C. and addressed the Congress of the United States. They gave her a standing ovation. At the age of 44 someone suggested that she write sacred songs and hymns.

She wrote over 8,000 hymns and songs in her lifespan of 95 years. Some of them are "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," "Will Jesus Find Us Watching?," "Blessed Assurance," "I Am Thine, O Lord," "Jesus is Tenderly Calling," and "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross." Many of her songs have to do with "Sight and Seeing." Even though she had been blind all her life, she could see with the greatest of sight with "The Spiritual Eye." Great things were accomplished by her because she asked only to serve! How blind are those who will not see!

– Author Unknown

SALVATION

Sanctification Has Two Aspects

Patrick Donahue | Alabama, USA

We all agree the blood of Christ is what washes away our sins, but when does it wash away our sins? For the apostle Paul, it was not when he believed in Jesus on the road to Damascus but it was three days later when he was baptized

Heb. 13:12 reads "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." "Sanctify" means (according to Thayer) - "to purify ... free from the guilt of sin." II Cor. 7:1 verifies this definition - "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (form of the same Greek word) in the fear of God"

We see from Heb. 13:12 then that we are purified (cleansed) by the blood of Christ. We can be forgiven of our sins because Jesus died for us. I Cor. 15:3 says "Christ died for our sins." This is something God does for us.

But the same basic Greek word is translated "holy" in I Pet 1:16 - "Be ye holy; for I am holy." This is something we have to do. So there are two aspects to Sanctification. One is what God does. He purifies (forgives) us from our sins when we obey the gospel. The second is what we do. We must then live a sanctified, clean, holy life.

I like how II Pet. 2:22 illustrates these two important aspects - "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." A Christian falling back into sin (verse 20) is said to be like washing a pig and then letting that pig go right back into the mud. The point is - what good does it do to wash a pig if you don't pin him up to keep him out of the mud? He is just going to get muddy again. The parallel being made is: What good does it do for a sinner to be forgiven of all his sins if he

is just going to go right back to living the ways of the world? In either case, nothing really is accomplished.

So let's talk about these two aspects of sanctification. First, what God does for us. He forgives us of our sins based upon the death of Christ. Notice:


- Heb 9:22b "without shedding of blood is no remission."

- Matt 26:28 "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Those two verses in combination show there is no way we could be saved without the death of Christ. It wouldn't matter how many times we went to church, it wouldn't matter how many times we read the Bible from cover to cover, how many times we got baptized, how many times we helped a little old lady across the street; we can't be saved without the death of Christ. We owe everything to Him spiritually.

But just when does that washing away of sins take place? In Acts 22:16 Ananias told Saul "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." We all agree the blood of Christ is what washes away our sins, but when does it wash away our sins? For the apostle Paul, it was not when he believed in Jesus on the road to Damascus but it was three days later when he was baptized.

Peter told believers in Acts 2:38 "... Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." So we are not forgiven of our sins



until we are baptized; that is, we must trust and obey just like the famous hymn says.

Acts 2:38 leads into our next point. The second aspect of sanctification is what we do. As a Christian we must live a sanctified, holy life. Acts 2:38 says a believer must repent and be baptized to get the forgiveness of sins. So baptism won't do us a bit of good if we don't repent of our sins first. Repentance here means changing our life in regard to sin. We make up our minds to quite serving sin and start serving Christ. Rom. 6:17-18 says as much – **"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."** When a sinner becomes a Christian, he commits to quit serving sin and start serving righteousness. And God expects us to follow through on that commitment.

Remember I Pet. 1:16? – **"Be ye holy; for I am holy"**? As a Christian we are supposed to start living the holy, clean, sanctified lifestyle. God is not going to force us to do that; it is up to us.

I Cor. 6:9-11 says **"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."** See how they used to practice those sins but quit to become a Christian? When they made up their minds to live a sanctified/holy life, they were sanctified/forgiven by God according to verse 11.

Jesus Did Not Come To Entertain

While Jesus was on trial before Pilate, the governor learned that He was from Galilee (Luke 23:5-7). This gave Pilate an opportunity to pass the responsibility for judging the case on to someone else. Since Galilee was in "Herod's jurisdiction," Pilate sent Jesus to him.

Interestingly, Herod was eager to see Jesus. Luke explained why: "Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing" (Luke 23:8-9).

Herod's interest in Jesus was not to dispense justice, nor was it to learn more of the message Jesus was teaching. Instead, Herod simply wanted to be amazed – similar to what we hope to see if we watch a magician perform. Yet this was not why Jesus came. He came to teach the truth and offer His life as a sacrifice for sins, not to perform tricks for people.

Since Herod did not get the show he wanted, he treated Jesus with contempt, mocked Him, and sent Him back to Pilate (Luke 23:11). Sadly, we can be guilty of doing the same thing when we are interested in the amazing things Jesus did but disregard His sacrifice and message.

So remember that Jesus did not come to entertain. We need to see Him as more than just one who performed amazing works. We must see Him and submit to Him as the Son of God.

–**Andy Sochor**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question

In Acts 1:21, to qualify for primaries to be an Apostle the ardent follower of Jesus Christ must have been a witness of Christ baptism by John the Baptizer down to when Jesus ascended to Heaven. When Jesus ascended, eleven apostles were with him; excluding Judas. Mathias who replaced the dead Judas didn't witness Jesus ascension. How come Mathias was a candidate for the primaries, and eventually stood for the election which he won and was numbered among the Apostles? Barnabas and Mathias couldn't have witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ. So, how come Mathias became an Apostle?

Thanks Preacher.

Answer

Acts 1:21-22 reads; *"Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."*

The qualification does not require one to be physically present (witness) at the ascension of Jesus Christ. It only requires one to have been with the apostles beginning from the baptism of John until *the day (not time)* that Jesus was taken up into heaven. People may have been with the apostles the very day that Jesus ascended but not necessarily join them to witness his ascension.

For example, if a US government official should say; *"Of those men who have accompanied with us beginning from the vaccination of COVID-19 patients to the day that President Trump left office."* That would not mean that to be qualified, the person has to be physically present to see Trump leave office on the said day. However, there may be people who had been with

them that same day that Trump left office but did not physically witness his exit. That would qualify them. The emphasis is on the DAY that Christ ascended, not the exact TIME he ascended.

Osamagbe Lesley EGHAREVBA

Question

Good morning Preacher, Please avail me scripturally backed examples of one person leading a Congregation in Prayer. Thank you.

Answer

Acts 4 is a passage that suggests such. In verse 24, we read, *"So when they heard that, they raised **their voice** to God with one accord **and said**: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them..."*

Only one person could have verbally said this because what was said was recorded. If everyone in the whole church was just speaking at the same time, which person's statement was recorded? It could only suggest that one person led the prayers. It was not a prayer that was previously rehearsed for all of them to come and chorus it at the same time. The immediate circumstance prompted the prayer.

Also, the principle of I Corinthians 14 applies here. Rowdiness in the church service is not decent and in order. Paul warned that all activities of the church must be done decently and in order (v.26). He said if more than one person has a tongue, each should do it one at a time (v.27). And he mentioned that a rowdy section in the church could lead to people thinking they are mad (v.23). So the point is rowdy prayer session is not decent.

Osamagbe Lesley EGHAREVBA

ADDENDUM

Does Church Really Matter?

Charles Ajujuoghene | Ondo, Nigeria

"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Col. 1:24).

Some might begin to think and say things like; "God does not care about church; once one can live morally upright then he or she should be pleasing to God the Father; Preach Christ and not church! All these and many others are commonly heard in conversations about the church."


In the above passage, Paul tells the brethren at Colossae and us today that we cannot separate Christ from the church. A fair question that needs a serious Bible answer is who established the church? There is no doubt in my mind that more religious unity would exist if everyone would just lay aside everything but the Bible and then answer this question in honesty and sincerity from the Bible only.

We are informed in God's eternal purpose for the saved – Matt. 25:34; Jn. 17:24, Eph.1:4. When God created man, he was pure and upright in the sight of God, he was without sin! Sin then entered into the picture and man through sin was separated from God bound by sin and unable to break the bounds (Gen. 2-3).

Being in the bondage of sin, man discovered that he has a need! A need that can only be served by a power greater than that which man can possibly supply. In answer to that need God puts His plan in place. Among the initial things that He did was the call of Abraham – Gen. 12:1-3. He promised Abraham that one would be born of his seed that would bless all the people of the earth. At the time of Abraham's calling, the actual birth of this person (Christ) was yet a distant future event. With the calling of Abraham and putting in place of God's plan to help man with this

bondage of sin, we have the beginning of the Bible record of God's son, Christ coming into the world.

This plan of God was designed to give one and all the opportunity to be free from sin, pure and upright once again in the sight of God (Jn.3:16). Throughout the Old Testament, prophecies that talked of this plan included the establishment of the church (Isa. 2:1-4; Joel2:28-32; Micah 4:1-13). Christ was born into the world (Matt. 1:18-25) and about 30 years later He selected and trained 12 men (apostles) who along with the prophets became the foundation of the church (Eph.2:20). These men were guided by and received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Jn.14:15-31; 16:4-15; Acts 2:1-13). After the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus back to the right hand of God (Acts 1:1-12), the apostles went throughout the earth preaching the gospel, the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17) by the authority of Jesus (Matt. 28;18-20). Men and women that heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized (buried in water) for the remission of sins, were added to the church being in existence (Acts2:14-47). Verse 47 is the first mention of the church in existence. Thus, the church was brought into existence through the preaching of the gospel by the apostles that were under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. John records for us that all of these was by the authority of Jesus (Jn.14-16) and we must remember that all of these was according to the plan of God. Maybe a good question to ask at this juncture is: **was your church established by Christ or by man?**



With the church now established, we might ask "what is the church?" This again is a fair question that deserves a serious Bible answer. An answer that would also promote more religious unity if all would listen and heed what the Holy Spirit (Bible) has said on the matter.

It is evident that many people tend to see the church as being somewhat like a religious train setting at the Jerusalem station boarding passengers for a trip to heaven. There are also group of people who think of the church as they would a lodge, Civic organization, corporation, council, party put in place by the decisions of man, which you may join and work with and or enjoy as a social outlet. But the truth of the matter on the subject is, the Bible is silent on the matter of the church being established by any procedures, by-laws, voting, agreement etc. decided on and put into place by the action of humans. The word "Church" (Greek, ekklesia) is a collective noun, and thus by the very definition of the word itself, it collects people.

But in reference to the church of Christ we are taking about people who have answered the calling of the gospel (2Thess2:14); thus "**called out people**". These people belong to God (1 Cor.6:20; Jn17:9-10,24; 1 Pet. 2:9-10) and are faithful and obedient (Rom. 6:17) that have been added to the church by Christ (Acts 2:47). **The church is not the building**, nor is it a man made organization or institution or even like any of these. The church is God's people called out of the world by the gospel, living daily in subjection to the gospel (2Pet. 1:3-4) as subjects of the spiritual kingdom or church (Jn.18:36) that answer to the gospel (Rom1:16). Does this sound like the church you belong to?

Let us also see to the question of where the church was established. Once again a fair and honest question

that is worthy of a serious Bible answer. Again, an answer that will promote unity of the religious society if we would but read our Bible and listen to what God has revealed on the matter. The Bible, God's record is extremely clear on "where" the church started. As a matter of prophecy we learn that the place was to be Jerusalem (Isa.2:5; Joel 2:32; Micah 4:2; Luke 24:27-49). As a matter of reality (fulfillment of prophecy) we learn that the place was Jerusalem (Act 1:4, 8, 12; 2:1-5, 14, 40, 47). Yes we are talking about the same Jerusalem that we hear and know of today. Once again it is time to ask ourselves an important question: was my church started in Jerusalem?

Having seen from the Bible "Who" established the church, "What" she is and "Where" she started, it is quite very important also to look at the question, "When" did all these take place? Again this needs a serious Bible answer. An answer that would help in healing divisive wounds if we are only willing to read and understand the scripture and the scripture only! The Bible clearly tells us the starting date for the church, it is the day of Pentecost in the year that Jesus died (Act 1-2); an understanding of this passage, leaves us with an answer of A.D. 33. Secular history records the fact that in the past 20 centuries many churches have had their starting date throughout the years. The one true church that Jesus built only had one date of starting and the Bible enlightens us to what date that it is.

Think about it: one church, established by Jesus, at one place, with only one starting date. Now, let's ask the final question for the subject matter where does this leave all these churches started by different people, at different locations and at different times?

"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father..." (1 Cor. 15:24).