



UNMASKING SOPHISTRY

A Journal of Christian Evidences and Comparative Religions

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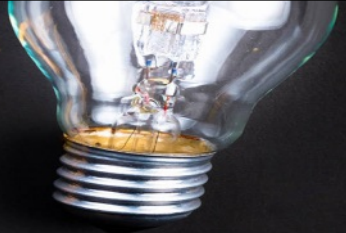
VOLUME 4

NO. 3

"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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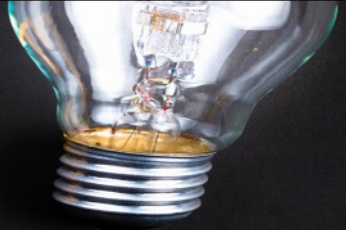
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From The Editor's Desk

This is the 15th edition of *Unmasking Sophistry Magazine* published since its inception and it is the third issue published in 2024. We thank God for the strength to carry on the work. 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 the last edition of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections such as *Misconceptions about the Lord's Supper; The reliability of the Bible; The church of the Chaldeans; The Reformation Movement; Did God forsake Jesus on the cross?; Are you a good minister of Christ?; The new heaven and new earth; Ignoring our differences: a hurdle in achieving unity; What must I do to be saved?; Twelve commandments for husbands;* and other intriguing topics. We appreciate all the encouragement received from our dear readers.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *Jesus Christ, the Chief Cornerstone; Is Bible Doctrine important?; The proper recipient of church benevolence; The rise of denominationalism; The history of the institutional controversy; Denominationalism: Churches of Christ and unholy alliances; What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?; Jesus Christ – God or Man?; Did God elect people by name before the foundation of the world? Quibbles that Backfired; Should a polygamist be baptized?;* and other interesting topics.

You are warmly reminded that *Unmasking Sophistry Magazine* is available online and all editions (past and present) can be freely 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 which the article he is replying appeared. Alternatively, a proposition will be set for the writer of the article and whoever dissents to affirm and deny respectively as the case may be – with the aim of knowing the truth on the subject matter.

Once again, all the prayers, feedback, and encouragement 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

How Christ Relates to the Church: The Chief Cornerstone

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22, NKJV)

As seen in our text above, the Bible describes Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone of His Church. This is the church that He promised to build (Matthew 16:18), the church that He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), the church that He is the head of (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18), and the church that He is the Chief Shepherd (I Peter 5:4). This is not some denominational church with a human founder, head or creed, whose origin cannot be traced to the Bible. The Bible reveals that there is only one body (Ephesians 4:4) and this body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Paul says that all faithful Christians are baptized into this one body by one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). This is not speaking of a denomination for division is condemned in the Bible (I Corinthians 1:10), and there was no record of a denominational church as at the time Paul wrote the letter. So, when we speak of Christ as the Chief Cornerstone of His church, we are simply speaking of the church of Christ (Romans 16:16) that began on the first Pentecost following Christ's resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:1, 47). Thus, this writing aims to examine how our Lord Jesus Christ relates to the church, with particular emphasis on His role as the Chief Cornerstone.

Defining the Cornerstone


One very good way to begin a discussion of this nature is to first define the concept or keywords used in the topic of discussion. In this case, it is important to understand what we mean by cornerstone before

talking about Christ as the Cornerstone of the church. The English dictionary defines a cornerstone as a stone that forms the base of a corner of a building, joining two walls. Basically, the cornerstone is the first and most important rock in a building. It is traditionally the first stone laid for a structure, with all other stones laid in reference. It occupies a conspicuous and honourable place in a building. The same dictionary also defines a cornerstone as an important quality or feature on which a particular thing depends or is based. Since a building mainly rests on the cornerstone, the cornerstone must be stable, fit, and aligned perfectly. Otherwise, if the cornerstone is unstable, then the whole building is insecure. Without the cornerstone, a building would not be sustained for a moment.

More than once in the Bible, Jesus is described as the Chief Cornerstone. In I Peter 2:6, Peter referred to Isaiah 28:16 concerning Christ as the Chief Cornerstone: *"Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.'"* In Acts 4:11, Peter said that Christ is *"the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone."* And in our text (Ephesians 2:20), He is described as the chief cornerstone upon which the church is built.

Jesus' Role as the Chief Cornerstone

Having defined a cornerstone, let us now look at how



Jesus is the Chief Cornerstone of His church. In the first place, we see that a cornerstone sets the foundation and direction of a building. Similarly, Christ sets the direction for the church as He alone has all authority, and He is the only lawgiver (Matthew 28:18; James 4:12). Ephesians 1:22 teaches that Christ is the head over all things to the church. Once the cornerstone is set, it becomes the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction; everything is aligned with it. As the Chief Cornerstone of the church, Jesus Christ is our standard of measurement and alignment. We are to look unto Him, who is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The Lord Jesus is the supreme monarch of the church. No man on earth has any authority to make any “church laws,” innovate any acts of worship, or change the doctrine (II John 9). The Lord can never be “voted out of office” or lose His position of authority for He never changes and never dies. Apart from being head of the church, our Lord is also its Saviour (Ephesians 5:23), its merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17), its blessed and only Potentate and mighty King (I Timothy 6:15), its foundation (I Corinthians 3:11), and its Chief Corner Stone (Ephesians 2:20).

Another important feature of a cornerstone is that it joins structure together. Similarly, Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone of the church brought together the Jews and the Gentiles into one body. I Corinthians 12:13 reads: “*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*” Christ, as the chief cornerstone of the body, has united both the Jews and the Gentiles and has broken down the middle wall of partition that existed between them, so that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross (Ephesians 2:14-15). In

the glorious church of our Lord Jesus Christ, people from all walks of life, cultures, colours, and classes have heard of the accounts of the cross of Christ. They have believed His great victory over the grave and rejoiced in His exaltation to the right hand of His Father. In loving obedience, they have changed their lives to be reconciled through the cross to God in the one body, the church (Ephesians 2:16).

Furthermore, the cornerstone in a physical building ensures proper alignment and stabilizes the whole structure. In like manner, Christ as the chief cornerstone of the church ensures an aligned life and provides stability for us. We are to be imitators of Christ (I Corinthians 11:1) and we must let our lights shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify God in heaven (Matthew 5:16). When we do this, our life will be in alignment with the will of God. When we abide by the doctrine of Christ, we have both the Father and the Son (II John 9).

A building mainly rests on the cornerstone and the cornerstone provides support to it. Similarly, the church rests upon Jesus Christ and depends on Him in all things. We are to cast our cares upon the Lord for He cares for us (I Peter 5:7). We must not think of men beyond what is written (I Corinthians 4:6).

Conclusion

The church of Christ is a glorious church – “*Christ...loved the church, and gave himself for it...That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:25, 27). This is a description of the Lord's church. God describes it as a “glorious church” because He is its Divine Architect. It is ruled by the glorified Christ who is with God in Heaven. Though Jesus Christ was the stone which the builders rejected—yet He is the Chief Cornerstone of God's entire plan of

redemption. In Him alone can we find salvation (Acts 4:12). He is the Way to the Father and no one can get to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone supports the building by His strength, and unites the several parts of it including the Jews and Gentiles. Jesus Christ is also the Saviour of the church. It is therefore only those who are in this glorious church that can hope for salvation.

Originally published in GROW Magazine, April, 2024: <https://growmagazine.site/how-christ-relates-to-the-church-the-chief-cornerstone/>

MEN, LEAD YOUR FAMILY TO HEAVEN

Loved ones, God designed a family with a man as husband, a woman as wife, and children being born to a husband and wife who are legally married to one another. God's kind of family has a Christian husband and father. Godly men must love their wives like Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25-29). God's kind of family has a Christian wife and mother. Godly wives are to submit to their husbands. The wife must respect the husband as her head (Ephesians 5:22-24, 33). God's kind of family has children born to Christian fathers and mothers. It is not a sin to choose not to marry. Neither is it a sin to marry and not have children. It is a sin to have children outside of marriage. God never intended for children to be born to unwed parents so that the government has to be responsible to feed, clothe, and provide for them. Christian men have the responsibility to provide for their family (1 Timothy 5:8).

God does not need big boys as husbands and fathers; He needs strong, godly men. David wrote, "Behold,

children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate" (Psalm 127:3-5). Leading their family and training and teaching children in the right way of the Lord is one of life's greatest challenges for God's man as a husband and father. Love for God is the foundation principle of family life and we all must do better in focusing on it. Save your family by being busy working for God (Romans 6:3-5). Pray more. Read the Bible more. Our spiritual citizenship and our hope for a strong family, God's kind of family, is through and because of Jesus, the Christ.

Dear God, please give us the strength to face life's challenges together as a Christian family! In Jesus' name, Amen. Let us go to heaven together.

-Samuel Matthews

World Religions

Is Bible Doctrine Important?

By Patrick Donahue | Alabama, USA

Most people who claim to be Christians think the details of what doctrine we believe don't matter, that all that matters is if you believe in Jesus. They reason that since preachers teach different **doctrines**, it must not matter to God. But since when does 2 + 2 equal 4 and 5 both?

I Timothy 4:16 says “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the **doctrine**; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” So to be saved, this text says we must continue in the doctrine. Meaning if we don't continue in the doctrine, we won't be saved – that is clear.

Evidently Jesus thought doctrine was important as he warned His disciples in Matt 16:12 “beware ... of the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” If doctrine doesn't matter, why did Jesus warn his disciples of false doctrine?

II John 9 reads “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the **doctrine** of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” So the doctrine we believe and teach must be super important because it determines whether or not we have God. And we can't be saved if we don't have God, can we? No, the only way we can be saved is through the grace and mercy of God.

Jesus said in Matt 15:9 “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for **doctrines** the commandments of men.” Do you see how teaching the wrong doctrine results in our worship being vain (useless, worthless)? We certainly can't be saved like that, can we?

If doctrine is not important, then it would be okay to believe, teach, and practice – abortion (Rev 21:8), gay marriage (Rom 1:26-27 “For this cause God gave them unto vile affections: for even their women did

change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet”), and etc.

If doctrine is important, then we shouldn't go along with - women preachers (I Cor 14:34-35 “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church”), the teaching that water baptism is not necessary to salvation (Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned”), once saved always saved (Gal 5:4 “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”), infant baptism (Acts 8:37 “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” [be baptized]), sprinkling for baptism (Rom 6:4 “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death”), etc.

Romans 6:17 reads “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 from sin ...” That says to be made free from sin, we must obey the doctrine. Question: If we don't know the correct doctrine, how are we going to obey the correct doctrine - in order to be saved from our sins?

I Timothy 6:3-5 instructs “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the



doctrine which is according to godliness ... from such withdraw thyself.” So churches must withdraw fellowship from those who don't consent to the doctrine taught by God's word. Why, if Doctrine doesn't matter?

II Timothy 4:3 reads “For the time will come when they will not endure sound **doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.” This is why most preachers (even many gospel preachers) limit their preaching to only what their audience already accepts in order to increase their teaching opportunities and earnings. They even participate in the ostracization of those who teach the full truth, so they won't be ostracized themselves.

Titus 1:9 says “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound **doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” Not only must we have sound doctrine, it is important that we use it to correct false doctrine. And that is only a popular thing to do if one is correcting believers not present.

II John 10-11 instructs “If there come any unto you, and bring not this **doctrine**, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” Most seem to just go along with those in different churches who teach erroneous doctrines, but this forbids doing such; instead we must oppose false doctrine in order to save as many as possible (and ourselves – Acts 20:26-27,31).

Revelation 2:15 says “So hast thou also them that hold the **doctrine** of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.” So we should hate false doctrine, not tolerate it.

Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' **doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Ephesians 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of **doctrine**, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

II Timothy 1:3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other **doctrine**,

Titus 2:1 But speak thou the things which become sound **doctrine**:

What about the doctrine at the church you attend?

SUPPORT THOSE DOING THE LORD'S WORK

The completion of the wall around Jerusalem was a time of great celebration (Nehemiah 12:27-30). Yet not long afterward, the Levites and singers left for their fields rather than continuing in their service (Nehemiah 13:10). Why?

This was a decision made out of necessity. They needed to provide for themselves (as all do), but they could not do it in the Lord's service. They ought to have been able to do this, but the portion they should have received from the tithe had not been given to them (Nehemiah 13:10), so they were forced to leave. Nehemiah did not rebuke the Levites and singers for leaving; instead, he “reprimanded the officials” because this resulted in “the house of God [being] forsaken” (Nehemiah 13:11). This happened because those who were serving there were not being supported. After Nehemiah's rebuke of the officials, the tithe was restored (Nehemiah 13:12-14).

Continued on pg. 36

DISCOURSE



It Is Biblically Authoritative That Collection Of The Saints Be Used For All Men

The topic for discussion in this section focuses on whether or not it is scriptural to use the collection of the saints for all men. Item Itaketo submits that it is scriptural for the collection of the saints to be used for all men while Joseph Oyerinde submits that it is unscriptural to use the collection of the saints for all men. Readers are encouraged to read both articles carefully with their Bibles.

Affirmative

By Item E. Itaketo | Rivers, Nigeria

1. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT WE DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN

Gal. 6:10 therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

The Bible teaching on preference in Galatians 6:10 does not mean seclusion. In the scenario of the circumstance in 1Cor.16:1, the contribution of the saints would be grossly inadequate to address the ensuing situation of hunger and despair to the whole Judean inhabitants, and secondly, the basis for which the contribution was made was because of the one family the Gentile Christians shared with the Judeans because of Christ. (Romans 15:26, 27). Hence, it will make sense to send the contribution to the saints in Jerusalem because that was the basis for which the money was collected. You cannot announce contribution for the sick and later divert it to building.

Taking a cue from Jesus' teachings that we love our neighbors (Mark12:31; and He affirmed "there is no other commandment greater than these". The question again, is who is my neighbour? Is it a member of my Church only or does it include someone I come across? Was this instruction of doing good to our neighbours only applicable to individuals? When the Church visits places like prisons, hospitals to preach

people worshipping with the Church in the prison or sharing ward with the sick brethren become her neighbour?

A certain Pharisee wanting to be justified by his loveless theology towards unbelievers (Samaritans) asked Jesus in (Luke10:29) who is my neighbour? Jesus created a dramatic scenario in order to answer the question he presented three personalities; the Jewish priest, Levite and a Samaritan, and He asked the questioner among these three personalities who was the neighbour of the man that fell among robbers?

Can the Church today neglect its act of good works towards unbelievers based on erroneous teaching/misinterpretation of the word? Jesus has never taught His disciples or apostles to segregate act of good works against unbelievers. In the ensuing discussion, Jesus said in Luke10:36 "Now which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 Then he said, "He who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." Jesus dropped a command in a declarative statement in verse 37 "go and do likewise". This command is relevant in all ages; Christians and Churches. No Biblical interpretation or perceived epistle in the New Testament would set-aside or supersede this commandment.

What the apostle later taught the Church was what



they received from the Lord and not a new commandment (1Jn.1:3, 5; 1Cor.11:23). 1Jn. 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 5 This then is the message that we have heard from Him and declare to you,...” Hence, the segregation of the use of the collection of the saints only for the saints as purported by some bible teachers is strange to the Bible.

2. THE LORD TEACHES THAT WE DO GOOD TO ALL MEN

The Bible, they say is unity, that is, a specific testament Scriptures cannot contradict itself. For instance, Paul's teachings in the book of Romans that Christians are justified by faith and James teachings that Christians' good works justify them. These two New Testament authors in no way contradicted themselves. Coming to helping the unbeliever, what does the New Testament Scriptures teach? We have mentioned that in many instances Paul affirms his inspiration or instructions by relating his discussion on a particular topic to what the Lord says. (1Cor.11:23; 7).

JESUS' TEACHINGS ON HELPING THE UNBELIEVER

Be like your heavenly Father. He causes His rain to fall on the good and bad Matt.5:43-48

- i. Love your enemies and do good to those who spitefully use you.
- ii. Love your neighbour as you love yourself- Matt.19:18, 19
- iii. Who is your neighbour (Luke.10:36-37)
- iv. Visit those who are in prison-
- v. I was hungry you did not feed me-Matt.25:35-40
- vi. Jesus feed the five thousand and at another time four thousand

vii. Feed those who hate you (Romans 12:20)

These are copious examples of the Lord's teaching on helping unbelievers which would become a standard for both the Christians and the Church. How could Paul, then, singlehandedly made a commandment that is inconsistent with the teachings of Christ? One would say that when Jesus made this teachings the Church has not started. Note, all that the New Testament Church is doing (from 1st century till now) is teaching what the Lord commanded (Matt.28:20)

Matt.28:20 “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Jesus showed us an example to follow (Mk.7:24-30). The Church of Jesus Christ never manufactured teachings or practices that were alien to the commandments of Jesus as such practices would not produce righteousness because righteousness come from practicing what Jesus commanded.

The Church is owned by Christ and could not create a practice that does not agree with the teachings of Christ. Doing good is an expression of compassion and everyone deserves compassion. In the scenarios of the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand respectively, Jesus never cared to ask who was a disciple or unbeliever, rather He was moved with compassion to feed His audience because the people were hungry (Lk.6:27-36). The boy who owned the fishes and bread handed it over, just like we hand over our contributions, and distribution was made to all irrespective of one's faith.

Should we go to places like prison or hospital and begin to do our act of good works to believers only, would that not amount to loving those who love us and hating those who hate us? The principles of God's generosity should be directed to all men, both by



Christians and Churches. (Matt.5:16). God has commanded us who have taken after His nature to love all men unconditionally (Agape love). Why would we place a condition to unbelievers before we help? This character is inconsistent with the nature of God (Matt.14:13-20; 15:29-39). Such theology breeds loveless character and expresses merciless spirit.

3. A TWO CASE SCENARIO – COLLECTION THAT WAS HEADING TO JERUSALEM WAS FOR THE SAINTS WHILE OTHER REGULAR COLLECTIONS INCLUDE HELP TO ALL MEN

Let us consider our analysis from a two case scenario. The collection as referred to in 1Corinthians16:1-3 was different from the regular contributions or giving (see Romans 15:23, 2Cor.8:1-; 9:1; Acts).

When Christians meet on the 1st Day of the week to break bread, they use the opportunity to gather or assemble for charitable purpose (Acts 6:1-3)

Churches in Galatia, Achaia, Macedonia etc have been giving regularly as they meet on the 1st Day of the week before the plea by Paul to help the Judean famine Christians. Hence, this particular gathering (collection) for the afore-mentioned purpose was special and different from their regular collection (1Cor.16:3).

Romans 15:25 But before I come, I must go down to Jerusalem to take a gift to the Jewish Christians there. (The Living Bible)

1Corinthians16:1 Now here are the directions about the money you are collecting to send to the Christians in Jerusalem (The Living Bible)

In these two case scenario; that is, the regular Church giving and the plea to support Judean famine brethren, which of the two collections should never be used for non-Christian? And by what authority?

We said earlier that the phrase collection for the saint is descriptive of the people in whom the collection was to be sent to. On this note, since our collection is not heading to Jerusalem Christians it would be wrong to refer to it as “collection for the saints”. We cannot adopt such descriptive phrase in all circumstance.

The collection is for everything the Church deemed fit to do with such contributions to the glory of God – It is for all men; helping of the needy, widows, orphans, those in the hospitals, prisons, supporting the aged, community based help like providing portable drinking water etc.

Hence, we simply refer to our 1st Day of the week collection as “Collection”. All sorts of giving that is done for whatsoever purpose on the 1st Day of the week is collection; whether regular or for a special purpose – none of these two is less.

The announcer may deem it fit to describe the purpose of the special collection for clarification purposes

Collection for prison.

Collection for sister Atim

Collection for bus repair.

Collection for orphanage and so forth and so on.

We should not be tempted to use such descriptive phrases as standardize expressions for our 1st Sunday collection – Let purpose not become standard.

It is based on this notion of using this description 'collection for the saints' as a standardize statement to define our collection during officiating on giving that has made some to lift the phrase to the point of a command. Not all collection today goes to Jerusalem Christians, that is, if at all any collection from Gentile Churches branch Jerusalem. Hence, not all collection is for the saints.

It makes more sense to say “collection of the saints” since the collection is made by Christians. However,



considering that in many instances in our Churches, unbelievers visit during our 1st Day of the week service and share in giving, it seizes to make the giving exclusively collection of the saint. More laughable is when we use the phrase 'collection for the saints' in referring to our giving today because it shows our ignorant position in comprehending the remote circumstance in context.

4. PAUL AFFIRMS THAT HIS INSTRUCTION WAS REMOTE AND NOT GENERALIZED. HENCE, JESUS' COMMAND TO HELP ALL MEN STANDS

How else would one communicate clearly if the one who made the statement quoted as a law says that he never made a law?

In a related book but on the same plea for help to Judean brethren, 2Corinthians8:8, Paul mentioned 2Corinthians 8:8'I do not speak by commandment but as proving through the diligence of others the sincerity of your love'.(IKJV)

2Cor.8:8 I am not giving order; I am not saying you must do it... (The Living Bible)

The statement of Paul as referenced here 'collection for the saints' was never intended by Paul to be a command, either ways, whether the statement itself or Paul's plea to the Gentile Churches to supporting the Judean Christians. Once again, Paul was not dropping a law but an advice.

There was a need by a specific group of people, Paul made a case why the Gentile churches should be of help and the Gentile churches responded and conclude sending the help to the people whom the help was meant for – for saints in Jerusalem (a remote incidence can never be taken as a standard).

2Corinthians 8:8 I do not speak by commandment, but as proving through the diligence of others the sincerity of your love. 10 And in this I give advice: For

this is advantageous for you who were the first a year ago not only to do, but also to desire to do this thing.

The following chapters 8 and 9 of 2Corinthians are a follow-up appeal to the Achaeans concerning the Judean famine relief contribution. (1Corinthians16:1-3). Paul had already taken collection from the Gentile disciples in Macedonia (2Corinthians8:1; 9:2). He was en route Achaia to gather the contributions/collection the Achaeans Churches has promised

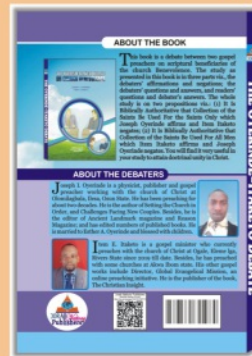
Paul himself in many instances affirms the inspiration of his instructions by relating his discussion or instruction on specific topics to the fact that what he has said did not originate from him but from the Lord. Paul would never say a different thing on a particular subject matter different from or in contradiction of what the Lord has said. (1Cor.7:10, 12, 25).

The collection is for all men, God's blessings of rain is on all men; both good and wicked. That is the nature of God and inadvertently the nature of the Church.

DEBATE ADVERT

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Religious Publication

THE OYERINDE-ITAKETO DEBATE ON CHURCH BENEVOLENCE



This book is a debate between two gospel preachers on scriptural beneficiaries of the church Benevolence. The study as presented in this book is in three parts viz., the debaters' affirmations and negations; the debaters' questions and answers, and readers' questions and debaters' answers. The whole study is on two propositions viz.: (1) It Is Biblically Authoritative that Collection of the Saints Be Used For the Saints Only - *affirms*: Joseph Oyerinde & *negates*: Item Itaketo; (2) It Is Biblically Authoritative that Collection of the Saints Be Used For All Men - *affirms*: Item Itaketo & *negates*: Joseph Oyerinde. **Price: ₦ 2,000** . Order ebook via: <https://selar.co/m/Jorab> or *hardcopy* via Whatsapp: <https://wa.me/c/2347038571981>

DISCOURSE

It Is Biblically Authoritative That Collection Of The Saints Be Used For All Men

Denial

By Joseph I. Oyerinde | Osun, Nigeria

Introduction: Calvary greetings to you all on the platform. It is hoped you have read through the affirmation of Bro. Item E. Itaketo where he made effort to prove that church collection can be scripturally used for both Christians and non-Christians. However, it is unfortunate that he failed all through to show clear-cut Bible passage which the context addressed the church in respect to benevolence for the unbelievers. Rather, he employed passages that addressed individuals to do good to all men contrary to the proposition he assigned to defend. So, it will be the aim of this piece to show his woeful failures to scripturally defend his belief.

Failure to Recognize and Distinguish the Difference Between Individual Christian and the Church

All through the affirmation of Bro. Itaketo, he employed various passages of the scriptures without recognizing and distinguishing individual Christian and the church. While it is true that a local church consists of individual Christians who have agreed to worship and work together (cf. Acts 9:26-28); each Christian still maintains his individual status as a member of the universal church (Acts 2:47; 1 Corinthians 12:27). Hence, context of every passage must be determined if it has to do with a local church as an entity or individual Christian. So, to use Luke 10:25-37, Mark 12:31, etc. which are context that addressed individuals to defend proposition about the church is a lack of proper exegesis and application of the scriptures.

Failure to Recognize and Distinguish the Difference Between Obligations of Individual Christians and the Church

Our dear brother Itaketo also could not recognize and distinguish the obligation of individual Christians and the church. This failure is inevitable because he could not even recognize and differentiate between the context of where individual Christians are addressed and the church. In respect to obligation to erring person, Jesus showed the obligations of individuals and the church (cf. Matthew 18:15-17). Individual Christian is to meet fellow person who offends him and as well to take one or two witnesses with himself to resolve the offense; thereafter the church can take up the work of reconciliation. Besides, Paul maintained that individual Christians are to support their dependents; while the church will support the really widows (1 Timothy 5:8, 9-10, 16). Besides, while individual Christians should engage in gainful business activities to support themselves (Ephesians 4:28); the church depends on willful contribution of her members to discharge her works (1 Corinthians 16:1-12; 2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:6-8). The difference is clear between Christian individuals and the church in respect to their duties.

Hence, context of Matthew 5:43-48 regarding Jesus' sermon on the mountain shows that individual Christians are commanded to be light and salt of the world, as well as to love their neighbours and enemies in order to be "sons of your Father in heaven." My affirmative presentation has clearly showed that Galatians 6:9-10 is a context where individuals are charged to do good unto all men.



Fallacy Of Appeal To Pity (*Argumentum ad misericordiam*)

It is observed that when Bro. Itaketo could not establish his proposition from the scriptures, he resorted to fallacy of appeal to pity. He used John 6:27-36 (although he mistakenly cited Luke 6:27-36), where the church is not mentioned to discharge any obligation, to describe compassion that should motivate the church to render benevolence for unbelievers; but he forgot to recon such compassion with individual Christians. Actually, Jesus miraculously fed thousands of people as a **sign** to show His divinity and God's spokesman. John 6:14 says, "Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.'" Besides, the text further showed that material benefit may make unbelievers to seek Christ for perishable blessing instead of eternal life (vv. 26-27). Unfortunately, many such people went back when Jesus frankly told them the truth (v. 66).

Perverse Deduction

While Bro. Itaketo somehow agreed that 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1ff; 9:1ff and Romans 15:26 established that church collection is for the saints; he wrongly deduced of regular collection from Acts 6:1-3 to include help to all men. What a perverse deduction! Acts 6:1ff addressed "disciples" whose widows were neglected regarding daily distribution. Nothing was said about the church giving anything to all men, rather the bereaved widows. Furthermore, Paul established that widows which the church could help should be qualified – faithful Christians (cf. 1 Timothy 5:9-10, 16).

Besides, as a result of this perversion and attempt to show that church collection is not for the saints only, dear brother Itaketo concluded that *"It makes more*

sense to say "collection of the saints" since the collection is made by Christians. However, considering that in many instances in our Churches, unbelievers visit during our 1st Day of the week service and share in giving, it seizes to make the giving exclusively collection of the saint." This conclusion could make us to think that songs, prayers and entire worship are not of the saints because unbelievers are present in the church service. What proves too much surely proves nothing!

1 Corinthians 16:1-2: A Command or Advice?

Towards the end of Bro. Itaketo's affirmative presentation, he struggled to show that 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is not a command but an advice. He had a hard time to properly harmonize 2 Corinthians 8:8; and consequently opined that 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is an advice. He posited, *"The statement of Paul as referenced here 'collection for the saints' was never intended by Paul to be a command, either ways, whether the statement itself or Paul's plea to the Gentile Churches to supporting the Judean Christians. Once again, Paul was not dropping a law but an advice."* Actually, it is the act of abounding or excelling in faithful giving that Paul wrote as an encouragement to the Corinthians to prove the sincerity of their love; just as he encouraged them to abound in the work of the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:7-8; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58). Both collection for the saints and the work of the Lord are commands. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is too clear to be misconstrued as just a piece of advice for the church.

Conclusion: Dear brethren, all honourable attempts have been made to show that Bro. Item E. Itaketo could not sustain his proposition. He could not cite a clear Bible passage where the church is commanded to render support for all men (saints and non-saints). All he could do is to cite Bible passages where individuals



are charged to love and do good to others because he could neither differentiate the context where individuals and the church is addressed and obligations of individuals and the church. Consequently, he resorted to fallacy of appeal to pity, perverse deduction and compromise of clear passage of the Bible.

While the sincerity, zeal and confidence of Bro. Itaketo are recognized and appreciated to debate this subject matter but failed to sustain the proposition; it is a solemn appeal that he and brethren of the same conviction should learn to speak where the Bible speaks on this matter in order for unity of faith to exist among the brethren. Thanks and God bless.

GIVE ME THAT "FEEL GOOD" RELIGION

Today, entertainment is expected in religion. Parents ask: *"What kind of programs do you have for our children? Do you have special music or church league sports teams? Are there parties and social meals, and trips planned for our youth and senior citizens?"* In other words, what does the church have for ME and MINE? Entertainment in religion is utilized to make people feel good, to draw in the people, and to keep up attendance numbers. But understand, what you win people WITH is what you win them TO! For example, a church in Ohio rented a movie theater for their worship, or rather their entertainment, services. One member said: *People don't come in with quiet reverence, it's just like going to the movies. Instead of popcorn and soda, as at the movies, people just grab cups of chocolate-flavored coffee and jelly doughnuts on their way into worship.*" The report says, *The service starts out with a skit about golfing and religion, and moves into rock n' roll with a heavy drum beat that brings nearly*

everyone out of their seats...There's dancing instead of kneeling...Scripture often still plays a role but in less formalized readings."

Why do we assemble? Is it for what is in it for ME and MINE, or is it to honor and praise God? We badly need to teach ourselves and our children that it is not all about ME and MINE, but it is about the great "I AM." Only when our priorities are in the right order will we find ourselves walking into the worship assembly focused on God rather than on ourselves.

Sadly, many churches today are offering what will attract the crowds, by offering various programs and activities that will attract the most people, rather than centering on Christ and His Word. When will men learn that the worship of God is regulated by the God we worship? One said: *"When we believe that we should be satisfied rather than God be glorified in our worship, then we put God below ourselves as though He had been made for us rather than that we had been made for Him."*

Acceptable worship is God-ordained, not humanly constructed. It has naught to do with human thought or injunction, rather, it requires us to rise above the thoughts and ways of man to the thoughts and ways of God (*Isa. 55: 8-9*). It is His will, not our own (*Matt. 7: 21; Lk. 6: 46*). Think on these things.

- Dennis Abernathy

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.

D. L. Welch (a Oneness Pentecostal) in a debate with Thomas Thrasher (church of Christ preacher) argued upon the matter of being baptized, according to Matthew 28:19, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and said: “In the commission...we find one name: N-A-M-E.” Like most Oneness Pentecostals, Welch argued that the Lord didn't say baptizing them in the NAMES of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit--not a plurality of names, but one name, in the NAME, singular, of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That there is one name for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that the one name is Jesus. And so, one name for the three. Therefore, the three are one person, of course. One name for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not three names, but one name. Thrasher responded that a singular noun is often used in the Scripture to refer to a plurality of objects by calling attention to the following verses. Matthew 18:16, “But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the **mouth** of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Thrasher asked: “Mr. Welch, was Jesus saying that all of the witnesses had the same **mouth**, or was the word “**mouth**” (singular) used to refer to several “mouths”? At the transfiguration in Matthew 17:6, the Bible says: “And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their **face**, and were sore afraid.” Mr. Welch, does this mean that all of those disciples had the same **face**, or was the word “**face**” (singular) used to refer to several “faces” ? In referring to the Jews' attempt to take Jesus, the apostle John records:

“Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their **hand**” (John 10:39). Mr. Welch, does John mean that those Jews all had the same **hand**, or does the word “**hand**” (singular) refer to more than one hand?” Thrasher said further: “The import of these passages is plain, a singular noun may be used to mean a plurality of objects. This is nothing unusual. We have all heard the expression “The baby was raised on the **bottle**.” What does this mean? Does it mean that the baby never had but one bottle? No, the term “**bottle**” (singular) is used to refer to a plurality of **bottles**: The same thing is true in the passages that were cited. Why could this not be the case in Matthew 28:19 when Jesus says to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”? (A clear example where the word “name” is used this way is Isaiah 9:6, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” In this verse “name” refers to several “names.”)”



Church History

The Rise of Denominationalism

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

In the previous article, we discussed the *Reformation Movement*, which came during a time when the Roman Catholic Church was a dominating force – religiously and politically. Over the centuries, it became more and more corrupt until Martin Luther challenged some of the errors and abuses of the prevailing system.

The focus of this movement was not to *restore* the New Testament order of things. Luther and other reformers did not see this as necessary. Instead, their goal was to *reform* the existing system by correcting what they believed was wrong. While their motives may have been good, this approach made it inevitable that they would fall short of the pattern handed down by the apostles. Furthermore, it opened the door to the formation of a potentially unlimited number of denominations.

What is a denomination? A denomination is a group of churches that have united behind a set of practices and doctrines that make them distinct from other “Christian” groups. They may have various leadership structures or ways to decide the points of doctrine they will agree upon, but they all have their own organization and creed that differentiates them from others. This *division* is a necessary component of denominationalism.

Since the time of the Reformation Movement, new denominations have continued to come into existence. To form a new denomination, a reformer (or group of reformers) would attack some error (or perceived error), and the number of followers would increase to the point at which they could break away and form their own body. This new group would adopt a formal statement of faith and practice (a

creed). This has recently happened in the United Methodist Church over that denomination's acceptance of homosexuality. A number of members and churches in that denomination saw this error, and when it was clear they could not correct it within the denomination, they broke off and formed a new denomination – the Global Methodist Church. This has happened so many times over the last 500+ years that there are an estimated number of 45,000 denominations worldwide today.

The First Protestant Denomination

The first major denomination to arise after the start of the Protestant Reformation was the Lutheran Church, which, of course, was named after Martin Luther, the chief catalyst of the movement. To be fair, Luther protested this, not wishing for his followers to carry his name. Yet they adopted the name and still wear it to this day.

After separating from the Roman Catholic Church, Luther's beliefs and criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church were written out in the Augsburg Confession of Faith in 1530, with the help of his co-laborer, Philip Melancthon. This was adopted by Luther's followers and became the standard that they followed. The problem with this should be apparent. After rightly opposing the authority of the Pope, they adopted the words of men as their authority rather than simply going back to the Bible and following its teachings. The fact that the Augsburg Confession fell short of the teachings of the Bible can be seen when we compare it with the inspired word of God.

One example of this is Luther's idea of justification by faith *alone*. In the Augsburg Confession, it says this:

“In the first place, our works cannot reconcile us with God or obtain grace. Instead, this happens



through faith alone when a person believes that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who alone is the mediator to reconcile the Father. Now all who imagine that they can accomplish this by works and can merit grace despise Christ and seek their own way to God contrary to the gospel.”

This idea of justification by “faith alone,” apart from works, was first promoted by Luther and remains popular among religious people today. Yet it is not Biblical. We are certainly “*justified by faith*” (Romans 5:1), but not by faith *alone*. In fact, James stated very plainly, “*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone*” (James 2:24). The New Testament teaches that we are saved by the grace of God when we meet the *conditions* that God has set forth, including repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Luther's creed says this is “contrary to the gospel,” even though it was what the apostles taught. Paul emphatically warned against those who would teach a different gospel than what was handed down by the apostles: “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!*” (Galatians 1:8). By teaching justification by “faith alone,” Luther was guilty of preaching “*a different gospel*” (Galatians 1:6).

Other Major Denominations

The formation of the Lutheran Church was just the beginning. While the opposition to the Roman Catholic Church was necessary, how the opposition was made – forming a new body united around a man-made creed – made it practically inevitable that the Reformation Movement would splinter into myriad Protestant denominations. Let us briefly notice a few of the major ones that came into being during this

period.

The Presbyterian Church – John Calvin is sometimes regarded as the founder of the Presbyterian Church, though it may be more accurate to say that his teachings (Calvinism) were the foundation of this denomination. It was started by John Knox, a follower of Calvin, in 1560. The name comes from the Greek word for *elder* (*presbyteros*) and signifies a church governed by elders. The church adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1643. As this denomination is rooted in Calvinism, they believe in the Calvinistic doctrine of individual predestination and the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion (among other things).

The Church of England – This denomination began in 1534 when the king of England, Henry VIII, severed ties to the Roman Catholic Church. The king wanted to divorce his wife, but the Pope refused to allow him to do it. So King Henry broke away from the authority of Rome, and the Parliament declared him to be head of the Church of England. It kept many of the rituals of the Roman Catholic Church, even though it had become a separate entity.

The Baptist Church – This group developed when a controversy arose over the practice of baptism. Because of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, infant baptism was standard practice, even among the early Protestant denominations. Some became convinced of the New Testament teaching that baptism is for *believers* (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-37), which means infants are not proper candidates for baptism. When they began to practice baptism for believers, they became known first as Anabaptists (for engaging in the practice of “re-baptism”). From this beginning, many different Baptist and Anabaptist groups emerged.

The Methodist Church – John Wesley was ordained



as a priest in the Church of England. During his time at Lincoln College, he became associated with a group of young men who were frustrated over the empty ritualism of the Church of England. They formed a group that became known as the “Holy Club” due to their emphasis on holy living. In order to promote spiritual vitality among their group, they strictly followed a habit of regular prayer, Bible study, meditation, and helping those in need. Wesley's original intention was to *reform* the Church of England, yet opposition led to the formation of the Methodist Church. The Methodist Discipline is the creed they follow, which has been revised many times over the years.

No Denominations in the New Testament

As it has been about five hundred years since the start of the Protestant Reformation Movement, and thousands of denominations are now in existence, many people think this is perfectly normal and acceptable. They cannot envision a religious landscape without different denominations made up of those who profess to be Christians.

However, in the first century, under the leadership of the apostles who were directly guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:13), there were *no denominations*. Local churches were autonomous and overseen by elders (1 Peter 5:2). No higher authority ruled over the elders except for Jesus Himself (1 Peter 5:4). Churches were not named after a human leader (like the Lutheran Church), an organizational structure (like the Presbyterian Church), or a particular practice (like the Baptists). Instead, they were identified as belonging to God (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1) or as the church in a particular city (Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; *et al.*). The apostle Paul called the churches with whom he associated “*churches of Christ*” (Romans 16:16). There

is no more concisely accurate and expedient description for sound local congregations than that.*

Summary

The Reformation Movement gave rise to all of the various Protestant denominations we see in the world today. Though many see nothing wrong with this, it is not the Lord's plan. Jesus' prayer was for those who believed in Him to be united: “*I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me*” (John 17:20-21). The effort to merely *reform* the Roman Catholic Church – and then the various denominations that arose later – would never bring about the unity Christ desires. In order to obtain that unity, men would have to do more than *reform* these man-made churches. They would need to leave these churches and *restore* the doctrines and practices found in the New Testament. There was a movement that attempted to do just that. Lord willing, we will discuss that in the next part of this series.

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* For more on this point, see the article, *Why Were They Called “churches of Christ”?*

<https://plainbibleteaching.com/2015/03/04/why-were-they-called-churches-of-christ/>

BARBS WITH A POINT

Denominationalism: Churches Of Christ And Unholy Alliance

By Rowland Gbamis | Tennessee, USA

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. ²⁰ "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (John 17:17-23NKJV).

Introduction

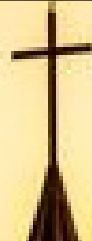
In one of my graduate seminar courses, one of my professors asked me if I would be willing to accommodate a denominational preacher to come and speak on our pulpit since, in his words, many churches of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, where he pastor with the Southern Baptist Church now allow for inter-congregational fellowship with various denominations among each other. In other words, some churches of Christ leadership in those areas permitted Baptist pastors to preach freely from their pulpit and vice-versa. Without blinking, I responded in an affirmation "NO!" for which he said he would have been surprised if I had answered yes. Since then, I have been ruminating about this unholy relationship and affiliation that creates no distinction between the Lord's blood-bought Church and human-made churches.

In the New Testament, we read that Jesus promised to build His Church (Matthew 16:18), that Jesus bought this Church with His blood (Acts 20:28), and that all saved people were in that Church because the Lord Himself adds men to it (Acts 2:47). Our text reveals Jesus' intention in His request to the Father on unity- **"that they all may be one."** Unfortunately, denominations as we know them today did not exist

till many centuries later after the establishment of the church of Christ. Today, several denominations exist in the name of Christianity, claiming to be Christians. Sadly, many unfaithful preachers and elders within the Lord's churches who have no regard for the authority of God's Word (Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11) are beginning to romance these denominational folks in an unholy relationship in the name of unity (Acts 20:28-30; cf. 1 Timothy 4:1). Accordingly, I find it crucial to reexamine the subject of denominationalism and the biblical position on this subject. Thus, my focus will be to consider denominational assumptions and suppositions, what God says about the church, the denominational ideation of the church, why denominationalism is never in God's plan, and the fact that we can all be united in Christ as we reject human wisdom.

Denominational Assumptions and suppositions

According to some, Christianity includes many different and divergent denominations that disagree with one another in their name, organization, doctrine, worship and God's plan of salvation for humanity. The latter assumptions on divergent views, no doubt, constitute division and not unity, even as the denominational world claims to be Christians and follow Jesus. To make headway, therefore, we must



forsake all human assumptions and suppositions and be willing to turn to the Bible if we must be pleasing to God (John 14:15; 15:14). In Ecclesiastes 12:13, the preacher rightly notes that **"the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandment."** If there is anywhere that the preacher's instruction is aptly needed, it is in Jesus' desire for his children in John 17:17ff. Consequently, to follow Jesus, one must be willing to deny oneself (Matthew 16:24) because true religion does not consist in what pleases us. Our aim should always be to please God.

What the Holy Spirit reveals about the Church

Ephesians 3:10-11 read: "to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the Church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

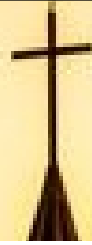
The above scripture shows that the church is important to God; hence, we must respect what God reveals and not what we think! The word "church" comes from the Greek word ἐκκλησία (ekklésia), used in the sense of an assembly, a [religious] congregation; the church, indicating the whole body of Christian believers in the Lord (ref. Strong's Greek 1577). In simple terms, ekklésia in this dialogue means those whom God called out from the world [in] to His eternal kingdom (Colossians 1: 13). To this end, the word "church" is used in two ways in the Bible. First, it is used in a universal sense and, secondly, in a local (restricted) sense.

Universal Sense: The universal church refers to the body or group of all saved people everywhere. It comprises all that Jesus' blood has redeemed, forgiven and translated into Christ's spiritual family (Colossians 1:14; Hebrew 12: 23). The following examples explain the universal church in its usage

from the scripture:

- In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised to build His church based on Peter's confession that **"He is the Christ, the son of the living God"** (Matthew 16: 16). Since Jesus promised to build His church, and He did, there is therefore no room for sectarianism as we have today because **"other foundation can no other lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"** (1 Corinthians 3:11).
- In Ephesians 5:23, 25, we read that **Jesus is the Head of the church and the Savior of His body;** Hence, He gave Himself for the church. Consequently, Paul's explanation above points to the fact that the church is the body of all people whom Christ has saved.
- Another sense in which the church is used in a universal sense is in Acts 2:47. The Bible says, **"The Lord added to the church those who were saved."** The church that the Lord added people into comprises all saved everywhere who have submitted to the Lordship of Jesus because He owns us (Acts 2:36-38, 40-41; 22:16). That is why a Christian can travel from one continent to another and fellowship with other saints without being rebaptized.
- Consider also Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18, 24.

Local sense: The church, in a local sense, refers to a congregation of Christians in a region who have united to work and worship. From biblical examples, these churches have a pattern of organization, work they are to do, and funds they use to do their works. Consequently, from the New Testament examples, Christians were not just members of the universal body of all saved people but also associated themselves with local churches. The following examples explain the church in its local sense from the scripture.



- Acts 8:1 - The church, which was in Jerusalem.
- 1 Corinthians 1:2 - The church of God, which was at Corinth.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:14 - churches of God which were in Judea.
- Galatians 1:2 - The churches of Galatia.
- Revelation 1:4,11 - The seven churches of Asia.
- Rom. 16:16 – "churches of Christ." In other words, "church" can also be used in the plural. In the New Testament, congregations existed in different localities but were not religiously divided. All had the same organization, doctrine, worship, and salvation pattern.

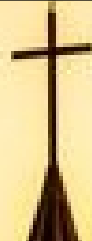
The Denominational Ideation of the Church

The denominational idea of the church today is that the church includes many local congregations that claim there is one universal church composed of all "saved" people. Yet, all these "saved" people in all these local churches are now divided into various denominations with variegated teachings and practices of men contrary to the teaching of Christ (Matthew 15: 7-9). Unfortunately, these denominations have their peculiar name, doctrine, organization, and plan of worship, distinguishing them from each other. Each denomination claims it comprises Christians but does not claim to contain all faithful Christians. Each denomination believes there are faithful children of God in different denominations. In their words, "There are saved people in all the denominations, and they all are going to heaven, just by different routes." After all, "One church is as good as another." It is just a matter of personal preference. Hence, they enjoin their followers to "join the church of their choice." It is unsurprising, however, because these man-made churches are not of divine origin (Matthew 15:13-14). The paradox is that while most denominational

preachers believe that there are saved Christians in all of their congregations who will go to heaven because there is only one holy Christian Church of which Christ is the head and made up of many denominations, the preachers and elders in churches of Christ who are holding unholy inter-fellowship alliance with these denomination folks are no different from their denominational counterparts in error. Indeed, I am afraid for the souls of these perilous men, especially the preachers and elders in the churches of Christ who are misleading the gullible under their watch and oversights (Acts 20:28-30; cf. 1 Timothy 1:18-20)! **"Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19).** God will hold such men accountable on the last day if they do not repent (cf. Romans 1:18, 32)!

Why Denominationalism is not Part of God's Plan

Denominationalism differs from God's plan in all ramifications. God's desire is for "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). In Acts 2:47, we are told that **"...the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved."** These saved people met in various cities; each group was a church of Christ in name, doctrine, organization and worship (Philippians 1:1). They were united in Christ and independent of any human association or alliance (cf. Revelation 2-3). Jesus did not wish His followers to be divided into sects and parties. Instead, He desired that they might be united. After praying for His apostle, He added: **"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may**



be one in Us..." (John 17:20-21). Unfortunately, through the years, divisions have developed, and these divisions have been perpetuated by the writing of creeds and the formation of denominational organizations. The result, therefore, is that now, among professed followers of Jesus, there are many bodies (denominations), many lords (religious authorities), many faiths (creeds), and many baptisms. Indeed, we all can see that denominationalism is not part of God's plan because, in Ephesians, we read: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (4:4-6). Accordingly, many regret the division among believers and wish it did not exist. They desire to unite all the great denominations and work diligently to achieve such an aim. Unfortunately, they assumed that until this is accomplished, an individual needs to join one of the existing divisions and maintain a tolerant spirit of compromise (John 7:16-18; 2 John 9). Sternly, nothing in the teaching or practice of Jesus and the early disciples supports this approach to unity in the New Testament (cf. John 8:31-32).

We all can be United in Christ

If we obey the exact instructions that Peter gave on Pentecost, repenting of our sins and being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, we too will be saved, and the Lord will add us to His Church just as He added those who believe on Pentecost (Acts 2:36ff). These believers were all in the body of Christ, not any known denomination (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). In Christ, we are united with all others in His Church. As members of the Lord's Church, we must carefully study the New Testament description of Christ's Church as revealed throughout the New Testament. If

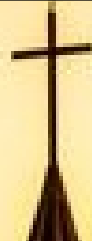
we are diligent like the Bereans (Acts 17:10 -11) to follow the apostolic teachings and examples, we can replicate these early Churches today, and the Lord will be pleased with us.

Conclusion

We have seen that the church is part of God's eternal wisdom in the Bible (Ephesians 3:10, 11), and denominationalism is strongly condemned because they are works of men. Thus, if we participate in those unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), we follow man's wisdom, not God's (1 Corinthians 2:5). The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Human traditions and commands make our service to God vain because the various denominations we have today were established by men and operated with human creeds not known to the New Testament. Consequently, they will be rooted up on the last day (Matthew 15:9, 13-14). Remember Galatians 1:6-9:

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

From the above scripture, not only is the forcing of Judaism laws another Gospel, but denominationalism is another form of the gospel also condemned in the scripture because it is nowhere authorized or commanded. Thus, if the apostle Paul placed those perverting the gospel of Christ under a curse during his time, how do churches of Christ preachers and



elders perverting the gospel of Christ by romanticizing and fellowshipping their collaborators in the churches of men think they can escape from the wrath of God if they did not stop and retract their steps back to God (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)?

GOD DOES MANY THINGS THROUGH MEANS

It becomes more and more apparent to me Calvinists ignore the fact God does many things through means. For example, they accept the several passages that say God hardened Pharaoh's heart and reject the several passages that say Pharaoh hardened his own heart. The former fit their system of theology while the latter do not. Most believers do that – accept what fits their theology and disregard what doesn't. What we should do instead is figure out a way both sets of passages can be true. And in this case that answer is found in the fact that many things are done through means as opposed to force. God give faith and repentance through means (leading/persuasion via the gospel Rom 2:4, II Cor 5:11, John 6:44-45, II Thess 2:14, I Pet 1:23, Eph 6:17) not by force. Consider this old debate chart ...

Acts 16:14 – How Did God Open Lydia's Heart?

Does God Miraculously Force people to convert, or does He use Means/Agency to influence them toward that result?:

- God gives us our daily bread (Matt 6:11), but is that done via a manna miracle or thru means (our jobs)?
- I Kings 11:4 says Solomon's wives “turned away his heart.” Did Solomon's wives turn away his heart by miraculous force, or was it through influence – still leaving Solomon with a choice?
- II Kings 13:2 says Jeroboam “made Israel to sin.” Did Jeroboam force them to sin, or did he lead

to sin by placing idols in Bethel and Dan - I Kings 12:28ff? Baasha did the same thing- I Kings 16:2

- II Kings 23:29 says Josiah was slain by the king of Egypt, but II Chron 35:23 says archers killed Josiah. Which was it? The answer is the king killed Josiah through “agents” (his soldiers).
- John 4:1-2 Jesus baptized or didn't he? He did it through agents - his disciples.
- John 6:44-45 the Father draws sinners, not thru miraculous force, but thru the teaching and learning His word
- Nehemiah 8:1 God commanded Israel ... through an agent / by Moses (verse 14)
- Matt 8:5 the centurion made a request of Jesus, but it was made thru agents, i.e., the elders of the Jews - Luke 7:3
- I Cor 4:15 Paul had “begotten” the Corinthians thru the gospel - thru means, right?
- Acts 26:18 God sent Paul to preach to people to “open their eyes.” But Paul obviously didn't do that thru miraculous force. In the same way, God opens/enlightens hearts/minds/eyes thru divine persuasion (Acts 28:23, II Cor 5:11) of His word (Psalms 19:8b), not thru miraculous force. The Scripture pricks/opens hearts Acts 2:37.

The same is true for the opposite: God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exod 7:13, 9:12, 10:1), but Pharaoh hardened his own heart “also” (Exod 8:32, 8:15, 9:34). So obviously God didn't do it thru force, but through circumstances. The choice was still Pharaoh's. The same is true for us. God hardens hearts and blinds eyes (John 12:40), but also people harden their own hearts (Prov 28:14) and close their own eyes (Matt 13:15). There is no contradiction. It is done thru means, not force.

God's goodness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). He does not force us.

- Pat Donahue

Institutionalism

The History of the Institutional Controversy

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

This is a continuation of the article written by Jefferson David Tant on the history of the institutional controversy which was started in the previous editions.

The Bible is quite clear about women in leadership roles. “*But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet*” ([I Timothy 2:12](#)). Paul goes on to say that this was God's order from the beginning. But that doesn't deter those who insist on their own way. For example, from New York: “West Islip Church of Christ is led by a group of gifted shepherds known collectively as the Council.” The website then names nine individuals, including five women. The website also mentions “Our ministers, Katie Hays, and Lance Pape.” By the way, the last word is that Katie now preaches for the Lawrenceville, GA First Christian Church. Lance Papa had a webpage dedicated to “Gender Justice” in churches of Christ seeking to encourage women's roles as “deacon, elder, minister, worship leader, preacher, teacher, etc.”

The Cahaba Valley church of Christ in Birmingham has a picture of its elders on their webpage. Their five elders include two women. How do they deal with [I Timothy 2:12](#)?

“From the indications inside the letters themselves, it appears that these books came from a period around 115 AD and were put together by those people leading the churches that Paul founded in his lifetime, attributing the material, as they believed its content to be, from Paul himself.

”Therefore, most scholars believe that, at times, what is found in I and II Timothy and Titus reflects more about what is going on in the churches of 115 than Paul's own views. This is true of the view of the law found in these letters, along with various other teachings about faith, the church, and even Jesus

himself found in these letters.”

It seems they deal with Timothy by simply dismissing it as “uninspired.”

Then there are such promotions as “Coon-huntin' for Christ” and “Gymnastics to the Glory of God” sponsored by churches. From there we go on to challenges about the authenticity of Scripture. “It is consistent to believe that the Bible is authoritative in matters of faith and practice, but may be incorrect in geographical or historical details. Once a person abandons the concept of divine dictation, he must abandon the idea of inerrancy” [William Abraham, a Christian College professor].

To look at the future, one needs only to look at the past. To read the debates and arguments of 100 to 150 years ago in the division with the Christian Church, one would think he was reading the debates of 50 years ago, as the same arguments were made then as in more recent times. Consider this example from the Christian Standard in 1893, as a writer is defending women having more prominent roles in the church. “A principle may set aside an apostolic precept. It may brush aside an apostolic decree. We do that constantly. We follow the apostolic example whenever we like it; when we do not, we depart from it.” Such thinking is still around, as I heard a prominent institutional preacher make the claim that “We do many things for which we have no authority.”

What we have been experiencing over the past 50-60 years is but a repeat of what has been transpiring since the beginning of time, as new generations arose in Israel that were not content with the ways of their

fathers. *“And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel”* ([Judges 2:9-10](#)).

In looking to the late 1800s, we see “the case with such men as J. W. McGarvey or Isaac Errett, first-generation leaders who serve as a 'bridge' for a little liberalism often discover that succeeding generations are not content to stop where their forefathers drew arbitrary lines, and are determined to carry to logical extension the incipient practices of the former generation” [Steve Wolfgang, *History and Background of the Institutional Controversy*, p. 31].

Conclusion

The division in the late 19th Century eventually produced three bodies.

1. The conservative churches generally came to be known as churches of Christ.
2. The more liberal group was usually known as the Christian Church, although in some areas the instrumental groups were known as Churches of Christ.
3. In time an ultra-liberal group was spawned, known as Disciples of Christ.

The division of the late 20th Century looks like it will have the same results.

1. The conservative churches that hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures and the insistence of having a “thus saith the Lord” for teaching and practice.
2. There are the “main-line” institutional churches that insist we do not have to have authority for all that we do, and then
3. There are the ultra-liberal folks who seem

determined to have the church take its place among the denominations.

This emphasizes the need for each generation to be taught the basic principles over and over again. When Israel came into the promised land, there were certain instructions that were given along these very lines. A stone memorial was to be placed at the crossing of the Jordan River as a perpetual reminder.

“And it came to pass, when all the nation were clean passed over the Jordan, that Jehovah spake unto Joshua, saying, Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of the Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging-place, where ye shall lodge this night. Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: and Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of Jehovah your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel; that this may be a sign among you, that, when your children ask in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall say unto them, Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah; when it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever” ([Joshua 4:1-7](#)).

God's ordinances were to be taught to successive generations.

“Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which Jehovah your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye

go over to possess it; that thou mightest fear Jehovah thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged" ([Deuteronomy 6:1-2](#))

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes" ([Deuteronomy 6:6-8](#)).

I remember gospel meetings as a boy in the 40s and 50s — tent meetings, camp meetings, etc. I often heard sermons on what was wrong with instrumental music in worship, but do not recall hearing a single lesson on the Missionary Society, yet these were the two prominent things that were a part of the division in the 19th Century. When the current division started 100 years later, it was not the instrumental music that was the issue, but Missionary Societies. They were not called Missionary Societies, for all knew they were wrong, but they didn't know why they were wrong. Thus a generation that grew up untaught on a vital principle fell into error. Through the 50s and 60s, supporters of the liberal trends debated the issues, seeking to establish scriptural authority for their practices. But in time, they ceased to debate, as there was no solid ground on which to stand. Thus teaching on principles of authority became something of the past.

Now we have a generation that has grown up in institutional churches that has not been taught on the vital subject of how to determine Biblical authority, and as the result, we see the increasing introduction of

instrumental music and many other departures. In many places, by the time the older members die the instruments will be moved in without any objection. Let us learn from history, that the cycle not be repeated.

DO WHAT'S RIGHT, NOT WHAT'S REQUIRED

When Mordecai learned about a plot by two officials against the king, he informed Esther who then told the king. The plot was thwarted and the men were punished (Esther 2:21-23).

When the king issued a command for everyone to bow down and pay homage to Haman, Mordecai refused to do so. His reason was that "*he was a Jew,*" implying that this was more than a sign of respect; it was intended to honor Haman as if he were a "god" (Esther 3:1-4). This was something a faithful Jew could not do.

In the first case, Mordecai was not required to inform the king to save his life; but it was right. In the second case, Mordecai was required to bow down to Haman; but it would not have been right.

As the people of God, our highest priority must be doing what is right by *His* standard. Even if no one requires or expects us to do it, our goal must be to do what will honor and please the Lord.

Likewise, we must refuse to do what is contrary to God's law, even if others try to force us to do so. As Peter would later say, "*We must obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29), regardless of the consequences.

So do what's right, not what's required. Often there will not be a conflict between God's law and man's. However, whenever there is, we must *always* put God first.

—*Andy Sochor*

MYTH BUSTER

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

The phrase “filled with the Spirit” is one that many Christians have heard, yet there seem to be diverse understanding of what it actually means. Ephesians 5:18 commands believers, “*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*” Some people believe that this refers to having spiritual gifts or having an emotional encounter. Others believe that it is meant for certain Christians like “Pastors.” What does the Bible actually say about this?

Be filled with the Spirit

To grasp what it means to be filled with the Spirit, we must turn to Scripture. The Bible in Ephesians 1:13–14 makes us understand that when a person becomes saved we receive the Holy Spirit as a seal. “*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.*” (Eph. 1:13–14). This points to the fact that Paul's command in Eph 5:18 calls for an increment of the Spirit we already possess. Moreover, the verb “be filled” is in the present imperative tense, suggesting an ongoing, continual action.

Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 5:19 draws a parallel to “*being filled*” by encouraging Christians to “*quench not the Spirit.*” Ephesians 4 verse 30 also encourages us to not grieve the Holy Spirit. Verses 22–32 gives us a good idea of how to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit. “*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye*

put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Furthermore, Ephesians 5:18 contrasts being controlled by alcohol with being under the influence of the Holy Spirit. A person under the influence of alcohol shows signs that point to such. In the same way, a person filled with the Spirit will exhibit signs of the same. From this we can see that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time event but a continual process of yielding to the Spirit's influence.

Characteristics of being filled with the Spirit

When a person is filled with the Spirit, there is a noticeable transformation in their character as highlighted in Galatians 5:16–25: “*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*



But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:16–25).

How to Be Filled with the Spirit

We have been able to see that being filled with the Spirit is an ongoing continual action. Christians can be filled with the Spirit by the following means:

- 1. Surrendering and Yielding:** Being filled with the Spirit begins with a willingness to surrender and yield control to God. Romans 12:1 *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”* This act of surrendering involves daily choosing to submit to God.
- 2. Studying the Scriptures:** Since being filled with the Spirit involves us being in line with God's word, studying the scriptures is an important part of being filled with the Spirit. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* (1 Tim. 3: 16 – 17).
- 3. Fellowship:** Fellowship is important for support in

being filled with the Spirit. Fellowship with other believers helps maintain a Spirit-filled life through mutual encouragement and correction. Hebrews 10:24–25 *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

Conclusion

Being filled with the Spirit is an essential aspect of the Christian life that leads to transformation. It involves a continual process of surrendering, studying the Scriptures, and fellowshiping. Let us strive to be continually filled with the Spirit, allowing Him to guide and empower us in every aspect of our lives.

BIBLE FACTS

- 1. The Shortest Verse:** The shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35, which simply states, "Jesus wept." This verse highlights Jesus' compassion and humanity.
- 2. The Longest Verse:** The longest verse in the Bible is Esther 8:9, which contains 90 words in the King James Version. It details a royal decree issued by King Ahasuerus.
- 3. Psalm 119 is the Longest Chapter:** Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, consisting of 176 verses.
- 4. The Bible was Written Over 1,500 Years:** The Bible was written over a span of approximately 1,500 years by about 40 different authors from diverse backgrounds, including kings, prophets, fishermen, and tax collectors.
- 5. The Original Languages of the Bible:** The Old Testament was primarily written in Hebrew, with some portions in Aramaic, while the New Testament was written in Greek.

IDEAL HOME

Isaac and Rebekah—The Couple Who Made Parenting Mistakes

By Chris Reeves | Tennessee, USA

Couples who choose to have children will certainly be blessed, but they must be careful to avoid common parenting mistakes. Learning from the story of Isaac and Rebekah will help us to avoid three parenting mistakes.

Introduction

The love story of Isaac and Rebekah begins with Abraham's servant seeking a wife for Isaac in Mesopotamia (Gen. 24:1-9). By the Lord's providence, this servant eventually met a young woman named Rebekah who was “very fair to look upon” and a virgin. She was also friendly, kind, hard-working, and one who was willing to serve others. She showed this by giving the servant and his camels water to drink (Gen. 24:10-27, 42-46) [Note #1]. After the servant told Bethuel, Rebekah's father, and Laban, her brother, of his plan to seek a wife for Isaac, Rebekah said, “I will go,” and she went with the servant to meet Isaac (Gen. 24:28-60). She was submissive, obedient, and adventurous. She returned with the servant, met Isaac, and became his wife (Gen. 24:61-67). She skipped the “blind date” and went straight for the “blind marriage.” Rebekah was a pure woman who served others and Isaac was a gentle man who loved her (Gen. 24:61-67). These two good people were made for each other.

There is no question that Isaac and Rebekah were good people and their marriage was good from the beginning. Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac and God blessed Isaac (Gen. 25:1-11). However, good people don't necessarily make good parents. Isaac and Rebekah were good for each other, but when they started their family, they did not act right toward each other and toward their children. They made some serious parenting mistakes. Let's consider three big mistakes that Isaac and Rebekah made and the biblical solution to each [Note #2].

They Made the Mistake of Favoritism

Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah (Gen. 25:20) and he was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:26). We are not told what kind of marriage they had for those first twenty years of their life. We know that Rebekah was barren and when Isaac prayed to the Lord, He gave her twins and He also pronounced a prophecy that “the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen. 25:19-23). All is well in their marriage, but that will soon change. After the two boys grew up, we are told that Isaac loved Esau because of the food that he brought him (see also Gen. 27:4) and Rebekah loved Jacob (Gen. 25:28). Isaac and Rebekah made the mistake of playing favorites with their children. Later, Esau was aware of the favoritism (Gen. 28:6-9).

Parents today need to be careful not to make the same mistake of playing favorites with their children. Favoritism can divide the children emotionally and it can also divide the parents. Resentment, bitterness, and mistreatment can arise within the family as a result of favoritism (see Gen. 37:3-4). God does not show favoritism (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; etc.) neither should parents. Instead, they should work hard to give the same love, provisions, discipline, protection, time, etc., to all their children equally. Couples with adopted children, stepchildren, or foster children have to work especially hard to treat all the children the same.

They Made the Mistake of Deceit

After some time passed, there was a famine in the land and the Lord also gave the same blessing to Isaac that



He had given to his father Abraham (Gen. 26:1-5). When Isaac was in Gerar and the men asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister.” He lied to them because he feared that they might kill him (Gen. 26:6-9). His lie showed disrespect for Rebekah and could have put her in danger. Despite Isaac's lie, the Lord continued to bless him with prosperity and the Lord repeated the blessing to Isaac again (Gen. 26:12-33).

It is now Rebekah's turn to be deceitful. When Isaac grew old, he wanted to bless Esau before he died, so he sent Esau to get him some of the food that he loved (Gen. 27:1-3). While he was gone, Rebekah helped Jacob to carry out a deception and a lie. She helped Jacob to present himself as Esau so that Isaac would bless Jacob instead of Esau (Gen. 27:5-16). Her deceit showed disrespect for Isaac. Sadly, it worked. While Esau was gone, Jacob lied to his father about being Esau (twice) and Isaac blessed him (Gen. 27:18-29). Jacob learned from his “loving” mother how to be a deceiver (Gen. 27:12). Jacob came to his father “with guile” (Gen. 27:35). When Esau eventually returned, he received his own (lesser) blessing from his father and then he turned his anger toward his brother (Gen. 27:41-45).

Parents today often make the same mistake of living a lie and a life of deceit while raising their children. They live right while in front of their children, but they live wrong when they are out of their sight. However, in time, children often learn of a parent's “double life” and it hurts them. It can cause them to distrust their parents and it may even cause them to live the same way later in life. Jacob and Esau actually took on some of the same sinful and selfish traits of their parents. Today, all parents would do well to listen to the apostle Peter's words: “Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil

speakings” (1 Pet. 2:1).

They Made the Mistake of Having a Child-Centered Marriage

Lastly, Isaac and Rebekah made their children the center of their marriage. Their marriage took a backseat to the twins. They both favored one child over the other. Rebekah helped Jacob deceive his father. She did not like the wives of Esau and she encouraged Isaac to send Jacob away to find a wife elsewhere (Gen. 26:34-35; 27:46-28:5). Isaac and Rebekah were so focused on their boys that, at times, they hurt each. It is true that on one occasion, Abimelech saw that “Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife” (Gen. 26:8). Here, they appear happy to be together [Note #3]. Yet later, their marriage would deteriorate to where Rebekah would not hesitate to deceive her own husband.

Parents today can make the same mistake. They can focus so much on their children that they neglect their own marital relationship. Some couples seek emotional gratification in their children, but not in themselves. Yes, parents must meet their child's needs, but not at the expense of losing their marriage. Couples can grow apart if they are not careful because they are so busy with work, raising the kids, and life in general. Focusing too much on your children can also cause a parent to overlook a child's weaknesses. A child-focused marriage can cause a parent to coddle their child's misbehavior instead of offering effective correction.

Having children is a good thing (Ps. 127:3-5), but you still have to “live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your life” (Eccl. 9:9) after the children are born. Right before Paul wrote about raising children in Ephesians 6:1-4, he reminded the husband and wife in Ephesians 5:28-33 that they were to live in a loving and cherished “one flesh” relationship.



Conclusion

Two good people can get married and begin their marriage well together. However, these same two good people can make lousy parents if they are not careful. This is one lesson that we can learn from Isaac and Rebekah.

There are a number of common mistakes that parents make. I know because I made my fair share of them while raising our four children. Some parents are too hard on their children (over-bearing), while others are too soft (permissive). Some parents do not spend enough time with their children, while others spend too much time with them. Some parents give their children too much of what they don't need, while others don't give them enough of the necessary things. Some parents ignore their children, while others treat them as “the center of the universe.” Some parents give their children all the worldly and material things of this life, but they don't give them the spiritual and eternal things (Bible reading, prayer, worship assemblies, becoming a Christian, good-work habits). Some parents make sure their children can get into Harvard, but they don't make sure they can get into heaven [Note #4]. If parents will follow God's plan for marriage and for raising children, it will help them to avoid these common mistakes.

Applications for Today

Newlyweds

Married couples who are new to their marriage need to be mindful of the possibility of making parental mistakes. Because parenting is new to you, you lack personal experience on how to raise your children properly. Work hard to raise your children according to God's word from the beginning and don't be ashamed to get help and advice from older, wiser parents.

Mid-lifers

Couples who have been parents for several years may recognize that they have made mistakes. Don't be proud. Be willing to admit your mistakes, learn from them, and correct them. You may even have time to correct your mistakes before raising the younger children who are coming along.

Golden-agers

Couples who are now older and have grown children can see the value of learning from their mistakes. Take some time to mentor younger couples about these mistakes. Talk with them about the common mistakes that parents make and what they can do to avoid them.

Notes

[Note #1] It has been said that just one thirsty camel can drink up to twenty-five gallons of water, and the servant had ten camels!

[Note #2] The idea of Isaac and Rebekah being good people but making parenting mistakes is adapted from David Clark in *The Top 10 Most Outrageous Couples of the Bible* (pp. 165-175).

[Note #3]. The Hebrew verb *tsachaq* means “to laugh.” It has been translated in Genesis 26:8 as “laughing” (ESV), “sporting” (KJV), “playing” (LSV), “showing endearment” (NKJV), and “caressing” (NASV).

[Note #4] I heard Mike Richardson make this point recently in a sermon that he preached at the Oak Ave. church in Dickson, TN (April 30, 2024).

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Salvation

Did God Elect People By Name Before The Foundation Of The World?

By Patrick Donahue | Alabama, USA

A congregation in my area says on their website – “The salvation of humanity is fundamentally the work of God. Before the foundation of the world, God elected His people, setting His affection and grace upon them (Rom. 8:29-30). In love, God predestined His people for adoption (Eph. 1:4-6). Faith is a gift of grace that is given by the mercy and pleasure of God, so that no one may boast. Apart from the intervention of God, humanity cannot choose of his own accord to worship God and pursue righteousness (Rom. 3; Eph. 2:1-3). God's sovereignty in salvation is comprehensive: from first to last, all of salvation is the work of God.”

Normally when people say “Before the foundation of the world, God elected His people” (with an explanation similar to the above), they mean the Calvinist view of predestination – that God has decided from the foundation of the world the names (as opposed to the character) of who will and won't be saved, and so we don't have any choice in the matter of our salvation (called Unconditional Election), and that Jesus only died for those thus chosen (the Limited Atonement).

My daughter and I were talking about this and she called Calvinism “**abhorrent**.” She is so right. According to this doctrine (as asserted above) not only are certain ones picked for heaven not really having a choice because faith is forced upon them (“Faith is a gift of grace that is given by the mercy and pleasure of God”), but others are destined for everlasting punishment with no chance to change that destination (no matter how much they want to serve God) because Jesus didn't die for them. But the **below verses against the Limited Atonement and Unconditional Election are super clear** to me.

Against Limited Atonement:

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should **taste death for every man**.

I Tim 4:10 ... God, who is the Saviour of all men, **especially** of those that believe.

I John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but **also for the sins of the whole world**.

I Tim 2:6 who (Christ Jesus) gave himself **a ransom for all**...

Against Unconditional Election:

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

II Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, ... but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that **any** should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Heb 5:9 ... he (Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation unto **all them that obey him**

II Pet 1:10 brethren, give diligence to **make your calling and election sure**

Mark 16:16a He that **believeth** and is **baptized** shall be saved

II Chron 7:14 **If** my people ... shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin

Is there anything hard to understand about the above passages?

Salvation

Would Having to Meet Conditions Earn Our Salvation?

By Patrick Donahue | Alabama, USA

In my recent debate with him, Traever Guingrich used a couple of “not saved by works” passages (Rom 4:2 and Eph 2:8-9) to try to prove obedience (specifically to baptism) was not necessary to salvation. My response was that such passages don't prove a sinner doesn't have to do anything to be saved, but that what a sinner has to do is not what saves him. See the distinction?

In the debate I illustrated my reply with four examples – the walls of Jericho in Josh 6, the healing of the Israelites' snake bites in Num 21, the cleansing of Naaman in II Kings 5, and the healing of the blind man in John 9. In all four cases, something had to be done (a condition had to be met) to receive the promised benefit, but what was done did not in any sense earn/merit the benefit received.

Let's quickly notice the walls of Jericho illustration in particular. The Israelites had to walk around those walls 13 times in 7 days for the walls to fall but the walking is not what knocked the walls down. See the parallel to salvation? It doesn't matter that this is an Old Testament story and that the blessing received was physical. What the story illustrates for us is that just because a benefit is received “by grace” (Josh 6:2) “through faith” (Heb 11:30) “not of works (Josh 24:13) (paralleling Eph 2:8-9), that doesn't mean nothing has to be done to receive said benefit.

But Traever responds if God promises something based upon a condition, that means if we meet the condition God would owe that something to us (else God would have lied) and we would earn/merit it. From here on out in this article, I will call that “Traever's rule” (since there is no Bible verse teaching such).

First, Traever should know his rule is false, because

how would that work with God's many unconditional promises? Like the one in Gen 12:3 that mankind would be blessed through Abraham's descendant Jesus Christ (Acts 3:24-26, Gal 3:8). Since God promised Jesus would die for mankind (I Pet 1:18-20), does that mean God owes mankind salvation (else God would have lied), and therefore we earn/merit it? Hardly, and Traever knows it. He knows that (for example) just because an engagement ring is a gift conditioned upon the acceptance of a marriage proposal, that doesn't mean the ring was not a gift – that it was earned/merited. His argument is unsound.

And Traever's own writings indicate his argument is unsound. He correctly argued in his written debate on baptism with my friend Tommy Thrasher that to earn/merit salvation, one would have to keep God's law perfectly his whole life. Here is how he put that concept in his comments on Galatians 3:10 and Romans 4:

- Paul upholds the standard of complete obedience in Galatians 3:10. If man's own law-keeping is involved in his salvation then it undoubtedly must be **complete and perfect**. But if that were possible then Christ's life and death were not actually needed. – p.61
- Paul next explains ... if righteousness is to be pursued by the law then it must be done **in totality**. Everything written in the law must be abided in order to escape its curse. - p.60

And so according to Traever's previous writings, meeting God's conditions of salvation do not earn/merit salvation; it would take living perfectly your whole life to do that. He's the one wrote it must be complete, perfect, and in totality; I am just



agreeing with him. According to Traever and the Bible, anything less than perfect obedience disqualifies one from earning/meriting salvation. According to Traever then, meeting conditions would not earn/merit salvation.

For my next point let's begin by noticing grace and gift are basically synonyms, and that both words are used to describe something unmerited:

- Grace - **unmerited** divine assistance **given** to humans for their regeneration” - Merriam-Webster
- Eph 2:8 **by grace** are ye saved thru faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift** of God

Next remember Josh 24:13 (“**And I have given** you a land for which **ye did not labour**”) and Josh 6:2 (“**And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given** into thine hand Jericho”). Does “give” (**grace**) in those two verses mean the Israelites didn't have to meet the condition of walking around the walls 13 times for God to knock the walls down? Did they earn/merit such by walking, or was it “**given**” to them? Meaning did their walking knock those walls down? Traever's rule would say they earned/merited such by walking, but God says just the opposite, that it was a gift (unmerited by definition).

Similarly, did the Jews earn/merit their healing from the snake bites in Num 21:4-9 just by looking up at the bronze serpent (meeting the condition)? Meaning did they heal themselves? Did Naaman earn/merit his cleansing from leprosy in II Kings 5:1-14 by dipping in the Jordan river seven times (meeting the condition)? Meaning did he cleanse himself? Did the blind man earn/merit his healing in John 9:6-7 by washing the mud out of his eyes in the pool of Siloam (meeting the condition)? Meaning did he heal himself? We all know the correct answer to those questions, and so we all know Traever's rule is false.

So once we've taken away his objection (Traever's

rule), we are left with this: The “not saved by works” passages are teaching what Traever taught in his debate with Tommy – our works do not earn/merit our salvation; one would have to live perfectly his whole life to earn heaven. But the “not saved by works” passages are not teaching obedience is not a condition of salvation. The Biblical evidence is overwhelming that obedience is required (Matt 7:21, I Pet 1:22a, James 2:24, II Thess 1:8, II Cor 5:10, Rev 22:14, etc.). As I repeated many times in the debate, texts like Eph 2:8-9 are not teaching one doesn't have to do anything to be saved, but that what we have to do is not the thing that saves us. Instead Jesus' death/blood does that.

SUPPORT THOSE DOING THE LORD'S WORK

Continued from pg. 9

The New Testament talks about the need to support those who preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14; 3 John 8). Of course, men can and do preach at times with little or no support; yet they do so in a limited capacity when they must do other work to support their families. More support allows them to give more attention to the work.

Beyond the monetary support of preachers, those who preach, teach, serve, and oversee need encouragement and moral support. Their work is difficult without that as well.

So support those doing the Lord's work. If the cause is important (and it is), we should make that abundantly clear. We cannot afford to lose laborers who give up due to a lack of encouragement.

–*Andy Sochor*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Should a polygamist be baptized?

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

Question

We preached to a woman who is the second wife of a man. She accepted and desired to be baptized. Is there any reason to delay her baptism even as she is still the second wife to the man?

Answer

In the New Testament, when people gladly receive the Word of God, they were baptized immediately without delay (Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 16:33; 22:16). However, there are steps that one must take before baptism. One of them is repentance. Repentance is commanded before baptism: *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”* (Acts 2:38). A person does not just jump to baptism simply by hearing and believing. The people on the day of Pentecost heard the gospel and were cut to the heart (believed – Acts 2:37). But Peter asked them to repent and be baptized. Today, the message is still the same. People must repent of their sins and be baptized.

Polygamy is a sin (I Corinthians 7:2; Matthew 19:4-5). When a man has more than one wife at a time, it is called polygyny. When a woman has more than one husband at one time, it is called polyandry. Both practices are wrong and must be repented of before baptism.

Some have argued that Acts 2:38 refers to a particular sin of “killing Jesus” and that such was the sin that Peter told them to repent of and that applying that text to other sins such as polygamy will be a misapplication of the verse. Thus, they conclude that polygamists should be baptized and should be taught to understand the truth so that they may repent later.

However, it seems to me that Acts 2:38 did not refer to a **particular sin**. The text says *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”* Notice that “sins” is in the plural. Were they to repent of “one sin” and have “many sins” forgiven? In fact, Paul was told to be baptized and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Did Paul repent of just one sin and have many sins washed away?

Will those who advocate that polygamists be baptized **without repentance** be willing to accept that those in gay marriages be baptized **without repentance** by ending the unscriptural marriage? If not, why not? I believe that the Bible teaches that repentance must precede baptism and only those who have repented should be baptized. Therefore, a polygamist (just as every other sinner) should repent before baptism.



Addendum

Jesus Christ, Man or God

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

The topic of the Person of Jesus Christ has been misunderstood by many in different quarters. There is considerable disagreement within the religious world concerning the Person of Jesus. Some deny the human nature of Christ and thus are false prophets according to the Bible – *“and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”* (I John 4:3). Some others deny the Divine nature of Christ; and unlike Thomas and the Ethiopian Eunuch, many refused to confess Him as God or the Son of God (John 20:28; Acts 8:37). Rather, some have chosen to oppose Christ and Christians on this very subject just like the Jews of Jesus' days did – *“Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”* (John 5:18).

This writing aims to explore and shed light on the dual nature of Jesus while He was on earth. According to the New Testament, Jesus is one Person with two natures—a human nature and a divine nature. He is both God and Man. To understand this, we need to examine the following designations as used in the New Testament about our Lord Jesus Christ: the “Son of Man” and the “Son of God.”

Jesus – The Son of Man

The phrase “Son of man” is found several times in the New Testament. In almost all of these instances, it is in reference to Jesus Christ as He often refers to Himself as the “Son of Man.” This expression emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. One passage that helps to prove the human nature of Jesus is John 1:14: *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his*

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” In this context, Jesus is the Word that was made (or became) flesh (John 1:1-3). The phrase “was made” shows a point of beginning. Jesus was born physically of the virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1). The inward person was eternal for He was God (John 1:1-3).

Also, another passage that emphasizes the human nature of Christ is Hebrews 2:16-18. Observe carefully this verse: *“For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”* This passage teaches clearly that Jesus had to become human in order to bring forgiveness of sins to the world – again, emphasizing His human nature.

Also, I Timothy 3:16 shows that Jesus who was God was manifested in the flesh: *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”* Indeed, Jesus took on the nature of men to live in a body of flesh. Some denied this truth in the 1st century as indicated in II John 7: *“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”* If we fail to grasp the human side of Jesus, we will have a warped view of the Messiah. In fact, those who deny this are called false prophets and Antichrists (I John 4:1-3).



Jesus – The Son of God

Jesus is also described as “the Son of God.” This is a phrase that emphasizes His Deity, His Godhood. One Bible passage that we may turn our attention to is John 3:16 – *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* Here, Jesus is called the only begotten son of God. We should not have a problem grasping how this emphasizes His Deity. Just as the son of a lion is a lion, the son of a tiger is a tiger, the Son of God is God.

John affirms the Deity of Jesus in John 1:1-3: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* Consider Paul's statement in Colossians 2:9: *“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* Godhead or Godhood is the state of being God. (Like manhood is the state of being man.) One passage that we must also turn our attention to is Philippians 2:6-8 where Paul affirms both the Divinity and humanity of Jesus: *“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* This word “form” carries the idea of being identified with the nature, being, personality of God. Jesus also came and took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.

Jesus claimed to be God, was proven to be God, and the apostolic writers verified that Jesus is God. Jesus accepted worship and this proves His Deity: Matthew 14:33 *“Then those who were in the boat came and*

worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.” Matthew 28:9 – 9 *“And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.”* Cornelius refused to accept worship as he was an ordinary man (Acts 10:25-26). At His trial when the high priest put Jesus under an oath as to whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus affirmed, *It is as you have said,* (Matthew 26:63) In John 10:30, Jesus clearly declared that He and the Father were One. The Jews understood what Jesus was saying. They charged Him with claiming to be God. (10:33). Jesus did not deny their charge! The multitudes and religious leaders understood that Jesus claimed to be God – *“Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”* (John 5:18). In the Old Testament, the prophet, Isaiah speaks of Jesus as the Mighty God: *“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

Peter confessed him as the Son of God: *“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not*



prevail against it." (Matthew 16:13-18).

Many other passages such as Colossians 1:15-18 and Hebrews 1:2 verify Jesus to be the creator and in the beginning and therefore God.

Conclusion

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has a dual nature: the Son of man, His humanity; the Son of God, His Deity. Failure to accept any of these will be a clear opposition to God's Word and will make one a false teacher (I John 4:1-3). Because Jesus is God, He has the right, the power to speak and command. We need to listen to all that He says. We can fully trust and expect Him to fulfill all His promises. If we fail to grasp the human and Divine sides of Jesus, we will have a warped view of the Messiah. Have you fully trusted in Jesus the Son of God? Have you obeyed him? *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."* (Acts 22:16).

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THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURES

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim.3: 16-17). All Scripture includes the holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The all-inspired Scripture is "God breathed." It has been said the Bible is "the breath of God in print."

The Scriptures are not inspired because some church

council decreed that they are. Rather, they are inspired because God made them so! Because Scripture is inspired, it is "profitable" or "useful," and thus, stands in contrast to the profitless teaching and speculation of false teachers.

"All Scripture" is profitable for four purposes. (1) "Teaching or doctrine" i.e., we are to teach and preach the God-breathed Scriptures, and not our opinions or philosophies of men. This precludes the creeds of men! (2) "reproof or rebuke." When people's actions jeopardize their souls, they need to be rebuked, which is to be done with meekness and gentleness in the spirit of love. (3). "Correction." It is not enough to tell people they are wrong (reproof); but we also must tell them how to be right (Eph. 5: 11). (4) "training, instruction, or discipline in righteousness."

In summation then, the Scriptures are profitable and all-sufficient as God's rule Book of faith and practice. The Scriptures (the Bible) is profitable for "teaching" (what is right), for "reproof" (what is not right), for "correction" (how to get right), and for "training in righteousness" (how to stay right).

Therefore, the Bible is "all-sufficient" (2 Pet. 1: 3). It shows us what is right and shows us what is wrong. It enables us to distinguish between the two (Phil. 1: 9-10; Heb. 5: 12-14). It helps us to get right, and it helps us to stay right, and it equips us for every good work! In matters of religion, morals, ethics, and how to live as a Christian, we have not been given the prerogative to do what we choose based on our opinions, or ever-changing societal trends, because what God says in His inspired Scriptures is ALL THAT COUNTS! Think on these things.

- Dennis Abernathy