



## One Savior

Jerry Fite

Only Jesus has met the qualifications to be the Savior. All of the prophetic precursors, including specifying Bethlehem as the town in which he was to be born, along with the angel's reassuring announcement of “there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord,” rest perfectly upon the place and day of Jesus' birth (Matt. 2:6, Micah 5:2, Luke 2:10). The Savior would be like a lamb without blemish, whose shed blood would be the sufficient price to redeem man from sin. Jesus was the Lamb of God (John 1:36). He lived without ever sinning (2 Cor. 5:24). No man living prior to or during Jesus' day lived without committing a sin (Rom. 3:23), and no man will ever live after Jesus who can truthfully claim he has not committed sin (1 John 1:8,10). Jesus stands alone among men who in truth and with confidence can challenge his critics with “which of you convicteth me of sin?” (John 8:46). Only his precious blood redeems man from sin (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

To qualify to be Savior, one was not only to die for man's sins, but must also be raised from the dead. Jesus was raised from the dead, a fact attested to by eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:4-8). If he has not been raised, we are in our sins, and

still in need of a Savior (1 Cor. 15:17). The one Savior emphasizes uniqueness. Jesus is the unique Savior, qualifying in all accounts.

Jesus was unique for he was God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). He therefore possessed equal footing with God and man. Paul writes, “For there is one God and one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5). Only one, Jesus Christ, possesses the credentials of mediator, and because the eternal Word took on flesh and blood, he could die, paying the ransom price for all (cf. Heb. 2:14). Yes, for all. The Scriptures establish this truth clearly. Jesus tasted “death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). Paul states that Jesus “died for all,” establishing the fact that “all” had died in their sins (2 Cor. 5:14). Jesus is “the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10), and he is “the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:1), thus leaving out no one from the Savior's purview. Simply stated, Jesus is the Savior of the world (John 4:42).

Despite these passages showing that  
*see “One Savior” on p. 472*

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## Divine Covenants

### Mark Mayberry

A covenant is a treaty, compact, or agreement between two parties. Covenantal relationships vary according to context. Human alliances, agreements, leagues or treaties may thus be identified. Additionally, these terms refer to the various covenants that have existed between God and man. Biblically speaking, two words communicate the idea of a covenant: *berith* in the Hebrew and *diathükü* in the Greek.

According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, “between nations: (*berith* describes) a treaty, alliance of friendship; between individuals: a pledge or agreement; with obligation between a monarch and subjects: a constitution; between God and man: a covenant accompanied by signs, sacrifices, and a solemn oath that sealed the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking it” (128).

In the New Testament, this idea is primarily communicated by the Greek word *diathükü*. Thomas says it refers to a “testament,” “will,” or “covenant” (1242). Louw & Nida offer the following sub-definitions: (1) “to make a solemn agreement involving reciprocal benefits and responsibilities” (34.43); (2) “the verbal content of (such) an agreement . . .” (34.44); (3) “a legal document by which property is transferred by the deceased to an heir or heirs” (57.124).

Generally speaking, “the initiative for such a covenantal relationship existed with one person rather than being the result of negotiation and compromise” (Louw & Nida 34.44). In human affairs, the more powerful king dominated his weaker, vassal subordinates. In the covenants between God and man, Jehovah alone sets the conditions.

According to some, the Hebrew word for covenant means “betweenness,” emphasizing the relational element of all covenants. Others say that *berith* is derived from a root which means “to cut,” originally signifying a covenant that was ratified by the cutting/dividing of animals into two parts, and the contracting parties passing between them. Genesis 15 illustrates both concepts: God’s promise to Abraham is sealed with the symbolic dividing of animal sacrifices and the appearance of a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passes between the pieces (Gen. 15:8-10, 17-21; see also Jer. 34:18-19).

### GOD’S COVENANT OF MARRIAGE

The covenant of marriage was instituted in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:18-24). In the Mosaic Age, God’s law of marriage and divorce was defined in Deuteronomy 24. In the New Testament, Jesus reaffirmed the Edenic pattern, see “Divine Covenants” on p. 473

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## The Holy Spirit Works Through the Word

Chris Reeves

It is God's plan that the Holy Spirit have a central role in the conviction and conversion of the sinner (John 3:3-8; 16:8-11; Rom. 8:1-2; 1 Cor.6:11; 12:13; Tit. 3:5). *The issue is not:* "Does the Holy Spirit work today in the conviction and conversion of the sinner?" "Is the Holy Spirit real?" "Is the Holy Spirit powerful?" "Does the Holy Spirit operate on the hearts of men and women to save them from sin?" "What can the Holy Spirit do?" All Bible believers accept the fact that the Holy Spirit works today. *The issue is:* "How or by what means does the Holy Spirit work?" "Does he work directly (without means) or indirectly (through means) upon the heart of the sinner?" "Does the Holy Spirit work through the word of truth, or does he work in addition to and distinct from the word of truth?"

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD (JOHN 16:8-11)

The Holy Spirit's work in conversion believed by most Protestant denominations today is called "irresistible grace." The background to this doctrine goes back to John Calvin who taught that each person is born totally depraved and needs a "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" to be converted. Calvin's doctrine was systematized into five points by the Synod of Dort in 1618, and later adopted into The Westminster Confession of Faith in 1647. According to Calvinism, the Holy Spirit works directly upon the heart of the depraved sinner, apart from the word of truth to make the sinner born again. Supposedly, the sinner cannot resist the Holy Spirit's work and that is why it is called "irresistible grace." According to this doctrine, man is passive in his conversion while the Holy Spirit does all the work of conversion for him. Today, about eighty percent of all Protestant denominations accept some form of Calvin's five points. Even some members of churches of Christ accept Calvinism.<sup>1</sup>

"Irresistible grace" has led to the practice of "praying through" at the "mourner's bench" or "altar call." It has also led to such expressions as "better felt than told religion," "a warm inner feeling," "getting religion," "having an experience of grace," and "catching the Spirit." The doctrine of "irresistible grace" runs contrary to plain Bible teaching. It negates the importance of man's obedience (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:9). It bypasses and overrides the free-will of man (Rom. 2:6; Rev. 20:12). It has faith and repentance coming from the Holy Spirit, not from man (Acts 20:21). It makes God a respecter of persons — sending the direct operation of the Holy Spirit to some, but not to others (Acts 10:35; Rom. 2:11). It makes God personally responsible for those who are lost (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). It proposes to save man without

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the gospel (1 Cor. 1:21). It denies the all-sufficient power of the gospel to save (Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16; see also Matt. 13:15; Luke 8:11; John 5:24; 6:44-45, 63; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 3:15; Jas. 1:21). It denies the fact that the Holy Spirit can be resisted (Neh. 9:30; Acts 7:51; 13:46; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 10:29). It denies the true nature of God's grace that instructs man through the word of truth (Tit. 2:11). It denies the true nature of God's call through the gospel (1 Thess. 2:13-14).

Go back to the original promise concerning the Holy Spirit's work in the world found in John 16:8-11. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would "*convict the world in respect of sin.*" The Greek word used here for "convict" is *elencho* meaning "confute, refute, reprove." How was this promise fulfilled? Look at the events that transpired soon after this promise was given to find the answer: (1) the Holy Spirit was promised to the Apostles by Jesus (Luke 24:49; John 14:16; Acts 1:4-5, 8), (2) the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles into all the truth (John 14:16, 26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15), (3) Holy Spirit baptism was administered to the Apostles only (Acts 2:1-4), (3) Holy Spirit preaching was done by the Apostles (Acts 2:4, 14-36), and finally, (4) the Holy Spirit convicted and converted sinners (Acts 2:37-41). How then did the Holy Spirit "*convict the world in respect of sin*"? He convicted and converted sinners through the preaching of the word of truth (Acts 2:1-37). The Apostles' words were the words of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:12). What caused the people on Pentecost to be "*pricked in their heart*"? Did they *hear* something, or *feel* something (v. 37)? They *heard* words. What did they receive, Peter's *word*, or "the direct operation of the Holy Spirit" (v. 41)? They received Peter's *word*. The Holy Spirit did not inspire the Apostles with the word of truth on Pentecost and then retire from duty. He continued to work through the word of truth, and does so still today.

One can find references to the Holy Spirit working through the word of truth in the other cases of conversion in the book of Acts. See Acts 4:4; 6:7; 8:4-12, 13, 26-40; 9:1-18 (22:1-16); 10:1-48 (11:1-18; 15:7-11); 13:44-52; 14:1, 7, 21; 16:14-15, 25-34; 17:1-9, 10-12; 18:1-8; 19:1-10, 20; and 28:23-30. Everything necessary for man's part of salvation is produced by the word of truth: faith (John 17:20; 20:30-31; Acts 14:1; 15:7; Rom. 10:17); repentance (Luke 24:47); confession (Rom. 10:6-15); and baptism (Eph. 5:26).

The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit uses *words* to convict the world of sin (2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9, 13; 2:15). The Holy Spirit always operates through the word of truth to convict and convert the sinner. The "*Spirit of truth*" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) always uses the word of truth. The "*sword of the Spirit*" is the "*word of God*" (Eph. 6:17). God draws sinners (John 6:44-45) and calls sinners (1 Thess. 2:13-14) through the word of truth.<sup>2</sup> There is a

direct connection between the Holy Spirit's work and the word of truth. Sinners are:

1. Instructed by the Spirit (Neh. 9:30) and instructed by the word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
2. Convicted by the Spirit (John 16:8-11) and convicted by the word (Tit. 1:9).
3. Born of the Spirit (John 3:5) and born of the word (1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; 1 John 3:9).
4. Sanctified and cleansed by the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:2) and sanctified and cleansed by the word (John 15:2; 17:17).
5. Saved by the Spirit (Tit. 3:5) and saved by the word (Jas. 1:21).

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN (ROM. 8:9-11)

God has also planned for the Holy Spirit to be present and active in the life of every Christian after conversion (Luke 11:13; John 7:38-39; 1 Thess. 4:8; 2 Tim. 1:14). However, there have been disagreements among brethren through the years over *how* the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer. *The disagreement is not over the fact of the Spirit's indwelling.* All faithful Christians believe that the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer. The Scriptures are clear on this point (Rom. 8:9-11). The disagreement is over the *manner, method, or mode* of the indwelling. *How* does the Spirit dwell in the believer? There are two basic positions held by brethren today over this issue:

Position A — The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer literally, personally and directly, apart from (without intermediation of) the word of truth.

Position A1 — The Holy Spirit personally indwelling the believer guides the believer apart from the word of truth through additional revelation or miracles (a position found predominately among the religious denominations).

Position A2 — The Holy Spirit personally indwelling the believer guides the believer apart from the word of truth through providence (a position of some brethren).

Position A3 — The Holy Spirit personally indwelling the believer does not guide the believer apart from the word of truth (a position of some brethren).

Position B — The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer representatively through the word of truth. This position best fits the New Testament teaching on the subject of the Holy Spirit indwelling, and is confirmed by the following five facts:

**First, it is a fact that all three members of the God-head dwell in the believer:** God (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 3:24; 4:12-16), Jesus (John 6:56; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal.

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2:20; 4:19; Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:17; 1 John 3:23-24) and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16; Gal. 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:14). These passages affirm the *fact* of the indwelling of Deity, but not the *mode* of indwelling. We must look elsewhere to find the *mode* of indwelling.

**Second, it is a fact that all believers dwell in God (1 John 4:13, 16) and Jesus (John 6:56; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:23-24).** Do believers literally and personally dwell inside of God and Jesus? No they do not. In the same way, there is no reason to believe that God and Jesus literally dwell in Christians.

**Third, “dwell” comes from the Greek words *oikeo*, *enoikeo*, *katoikeo*, and *meno*.** These words do not demand a literal, personal, supernatural indwelling. It is an assumption to say that “dwell” always means a “literal, personal indwelling.” “Dwell” is often used to mean a *relationship* (fellowship) that a person has with someone or something as a result of the influence of someone or something. Consider how the following words are used of things dwelling in a person: sin (Rom. 7:17); Satan (Rev. 2:13); word of Christ (Col. 3:16); truth (2 John 2); faith (2 Tim. 1:5); love of God (1 John 3:17); and eternal life (1 John 3:15). Consider also how a person can dwell in some things: darkness (John 12:46); light (1 John 2:10); and the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). Is the believer literally dwelling inside the light or the doctrine of Christ? No he is not. Thus, the word “dwell” does not demand a literal indwelling.

**Fourth, the *mode* of indwelling is explained in such passages as Ephesians 3:17: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15).** Christ (or any personality of deity) dwells in us through or by means of “faith” which comes from hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

**Fifth, both Christ (Eph. 3:17) and the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:5-6) are said to be in the “heart” of the believer.** The “heart” of the believer in these verses and elsewhere in the Bible refers to the “intellect,” “emotions,” “will,” or

“mind” of man, not the physical muscle that pumps blood. As the Holy Spirit’s words enter the “heart” or “mind” of the believer, the Holy Spirit dwells representatively in the believer. When a Christian lets God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit dwell in him through the word of truth he becomes God-like, Christ-like, and Spirit-like.

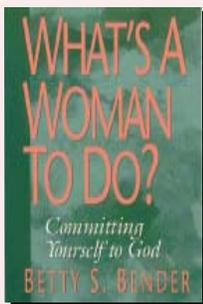
Friend, if you are waiting for a “direct operation of the Holy Spirit” or a literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit apart from the word of truth, you are waiting in vain. The Holy Spirit works on the sinner and the saint today through the word of truth. What is your response to the work of the Holy Spirit through the word of truth? Will you ignore him (Neh. 9:30)? Will you harden yourself against him (Zech. 7:12)? Will you resist him (Acts 7:51)? Or, will you be “*born of the Spirit*” today (John 3:3-5)? How you respond to the work of the Holy Spirit will determine your eternal destiny (Acts 13:46).

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> On February 24, 1947, Glenn V. Tingley affirmed the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in debate with W. Curtis Porter (*Porter-Tingley Debate*, Guardian of Truth Foundation, 1947). In 1968, Cecil Willis documented alleged direct operations of the Holy Spirit among Churches of Christ in *The Gospel Guardian*, Volume 20, page 30. For other quotes defending this erroneous doctrine see *The Five Points of Calvinism* by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, pages 48-49 (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit uses the instrument of the Word of truth (Eph. 6:17), but this does not mean that the Holy Spirit becomes the literal word of truth. Just as God spoke through the prophets (Heb. 1:1) and the angels (Heb. 2:2), but did not become the prophets or the angels, so the Holy Spirit works through the word of truth without becoming the word of truth. A sinner is not converted by the word only, or by the Holy Spirit only; but, the Holy Spirit working through the word of truth. Remember, when you hold a Bible in hand, you are not holding the Holy Spirit.

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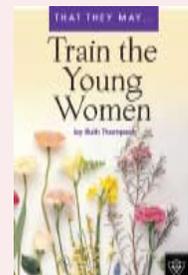
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# One Plan of Salvation

Irvin Himmel

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God works according to plan. His actions are not hit-or-miss, haphazard, slapdash, or inadvertent. He carefully designed a program for saving man from sin and its dreadful penalty. A plan is a systematic arrangement worked out beforehand for the accomplishment of an objective.

God's plan of redemption centers in Christ. The sending of Christ into the world was neither by accident nor by happenstance. His coming was foretold by the prophets and was according to God's eternal purpose.

The time of Christ's coming was planned. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

The intent of Christ's coming was planned. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14).

The manner of Christ's coming was planned. Isaiah foretold that a virgin would conceive and bear a son (Isa. 7:14). Mary, a virgin, was found to be with child before her marriage to Joseph was consummated. The angel of the Lord explained to Joseph that the child in Mary's womb was conceived of the Holy Spirit. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:18-21).

The death and resurrection of Christ were planned. Peter declared on Pentecost that Jesus was "delivered up by the

determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). Furthermore, David said concerning the Messiah that his soul would not be left in hades, neither would God suffer his Holy One to see corruption. God swore with an oath that of the fruit of David's loins, "he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:25-31).

The gospel was planned as the means of calling people to salvation. "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14). God calls with an holy calling, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). The gospel call to salvation is according to God's purpose. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

The church is included in God's plan. The church makes known the manifold wisdom of God, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). H.T. Anderson translates it, "according to the arrangement of the ages, which he established by Christ Jesus our Lord." The church of Christ was not established by accident; it was not an afterthought in the mind of God. It originated because of God's eternal plan, arrangement, resolve, will, or purpose.

## HUMAN ARRANGEMENTS

Modern preachers offer a variety of plans from which one may choose. Before we look further at God's plan and what it requires on man's part, let us examine some of the ways of salvation proposed and preached in our time.

**1. Way of one's parents.** Some urge people to follow in the footsteps of their parents. Whatever religion the

parents embraced, the assumption is that they were saved. And the only reason that some people have for conforming to a certain scheme or plan is that this is what mother and father did.

Give me that old time religion,  
It was good for our mothers.  
It has saved our fathers,  
And it's good enough for me.

**2. Life of moral uprightness.** A lot of folks are convinced that if they refrain from fornication, drunkenness, stealing, murder, lying, etc., that God will accept them in the final day. They expect moral uprightness to somehow compensate for their sins.

**3. Praying through.** Certain preachers have been known to exhort sinners to pray for salvation. People are told to keep on praying until God answers with assurance of forgiveness. Their experience is “better-felt-than-told.”

**4. Inviting Jesus to come into the heart.** Ernest Angley, a TV preacher, tells his hearers that to be saved they need to open their hearts and invite Jesus to come in. He puts it like this, “Just say, ‘Come on in Jesus. Come on in.’ He will come in and save you. Then you should say, ‘Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus.’ Praise God!”

**5. Trusting the Lord.** Oliver B. Greene of The Gospel Hour, Inc., says, “When Jesus had paid sin’s debt He sat down at God’s right hand. He had finished redemption. . . . When we trust Jesus our redemption is complete . . . finished. The split second we are born into God’s family, we are as much a son of God as we will ever be. We are completely and totally redeemed” (Comments on Eph. 2:10). This plan offers salvation the split second one trusts in Jesus.

**6. Making a commitment to Christ in a short prayer.** This is a popular way in which denominational preachers are offering salvation. People are encouraged to admit that they are sinners, confess Jesus as Lord, and pledge to surrender themselves to him. Presto! They are saved! The following example is from the web site of a Baptist church in Somerset, Kentucky, and is typical:

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by Nancy Eichman

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so right now by simply praying with faith.

“Lord, I realize that I am a sinner, and that you paid the price for my sin. Please forgive me of my sin and save me. I here and now accept Jesus as my Saviour. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Once you have thus committed yourself to Christ, believing that He will do just as He promised, Christ takes over. You do not have to pray this way and make this commitment but once. The great transaction is done, once for all!

## GOD HAS ONE PLAN FOR ALL

The only way to the Father is through Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

All who are saved, Jews and Gentiles alike, are reconciled to God in one body by the cross (Eph. 2:13-18). Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). God’s grace makes salvation available (Tit. 2:11). We accept God’s offer of salvation through the exercise of faith. Baptism is an act of faith, not a work of merit. The great transaction is done when one is baptized into Christ.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

Jesus told the apostles to go and preach the gospel to every creature, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). Note that Jesus did not say, “He that believeth shall be saved, and then he should be baptized because he is saved.”

On Pentecost, after people had been taught that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, they asked Peter and the other apostles what to do. Peter did not tell them to admit that they were sinners, trust in Jesus, and make a commitment in prayer. He did not tell them to invite Jesus to come into their hearts. He did not tell them to follow the religion of their parents. He did not tell them that moral uprightness was all they needed. He told them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

Obedience to human arrangements will not save us. We must obey Christ. He is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

2820 Hunterwood Dr., S.E., Decatur, Alabama 35603 [irvidor@juno.com](mailto:irvidor@juno.com)

# Baptism for the Remission of Sins

Frank Himmel

---

What must I do to be saved? There is no greater question. We wish more people would ask. Unfortunately, those who do often get incomplete or erroneous answers. While faith is usually considered essential, repentance is often misunderstood and baptism is almost universally dismissed as having any part in one's forgiveness. It is relegated to an after-the-fact public profession that one has already been saved. What does the word of God say?

## BAPTISM IN THE GOSPELS

Just before returning to heaven, Jesus gave the great commission to his apostles. He charged them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). The gospel is the good news that God offers us salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The terms of this salvation are unmistakably plain: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

This simple statement contains two requirements, believe and be baptized, and one outcome, salvation. How can that be misunderstood? Why would anyone think only one of the actions is required, the other optional? Yet that is precisely how this verse is commonly interpreted. Some argue that baptism is optional because Jesus said the one who does not believe will be condemned, but he said nothing about the one who is not baptized. No, Jesus' point was, there are two kinds of people: those with obedient faith and those without it. The former will be saved, the latter will not. The "faith only" crowd is in the latter category (Jas. 2:14-26). Note that in Luke's account, Jesus also included repentance as a condition for forgiveness (Luke 24:47).

Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." Man says, "He who believes and is not baptized will be saved." Can you see the difference? Which one do you believe?

## BAPTISM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The book of Acts relates the apostles carrying out Jesus' charge. It is the great commission in action. Just a week or

so after Jesus' ascension, Peter proclaimed on Pentecost his death, burial, and resurrection. He affirmed that Jesus was not only raised, he was exalted to God's right hand where he sits on the throne of David. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). "Know for certain" is the requirement to believe in Jesus.

Many in the audience were convinced. They realized their terrible mistake in crucifying the Son of God. They asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (v. 38). Believe, repent, be baptized. Peter was preaching exactly what Jesus had told him to.

The apostles said baptism is for the forgiveness or remission of sins. What could be plainer? But again, some want to deny the obvious. They claim the expression *for forgiveness of sins* does not mean in order for them to be forgiven, but because they have been. Let us see.

Peter's instruction has two actions, repent and be baptized, and one purpose, forgiveness of sins. If baptism is because sins have been forgiven, so is repentance. But repentance is "that your sins may be wiped away" (Acts 3:19), not because they have been. Therefore, so is baptism. Remember, the question was, "What must we do?" It was asked from pierced hearts. It was the inquiry of guilty souls seeking forgiveness, not saved souls already enjoying it and wanting to know what next.

Less than two months earlier, Jesus used precisely the same expression while instituting the Lord's supper. He said of the fruit of the vine, "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many, for forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Was Jesus' blood shed so that sins could be forgiven or because they already were? The answer is obvious (Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7). There is no justification for taking the expression to mean opposite

things in these two texts. In both places, requisites to forgiveness are in view: Jesus had to shed his blood, and we have to be baptized. The New Revised Standard Version renders Acts 2:38, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.”

The inspired apostles said baptism is “for the forgiveness of sins.” Uninspired man says it is “not for the forgiveness of sins.” Can you see the difference? Which do you believe?

The apostles continued preaching Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, and continued commanding people to believe, repent, and be baptized. Baptism’s essentiality is seen in the urgency with which it was done. An Ethiopian nobleman wanted to do it at his first opportunity, out in the middle of nowhere (Acts 8:36). Cornelius was ordered to do it at the end of the first sermon he ever heard (Acts 10:48). The jailer at Philippi was baptized in the wee hours of the morning, when he first heard the gospel (Acts 16:33). Ananias’ initial instruction to Saul of Tarsus was, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). Why the hurry in all these cases if baptism is no more than a declaration of one’s faith? Why not wait for more convenient circumstances with larger audiences?

### BAPTISM IN THE EPISTLES

The place of baptism stated in Jesus’ commission and illustrated in the apostles’ preaching is confirmed in various references throughout the New Testament letters.

Romans 6 is a chapter about the importance of Christians putting away sin from their lives: “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (v. 2). And when did we die to sin? “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, so we too might walk in newness of

life” (vv. 3-4). We die to the practice of sin in repentance; we die to its guilt in baptism.

Paul said we are baptized into the death of Christ, that is, into its benefits. If we are saved prior to baptism, we are saved apart from the blood of Christ. Yet the Bible plainly affirms the opposite (Rom. 5:9). Paul said we are baptized into Christ. If we are saved prior to baptism, we are saved outside of Christ. Yet the Bible plainly affirms the opposite (Eph. 1:7). Paul said baptism is a burial from which we rise to walk in newness of life. If we are saved prior to baptism, instead of being buried and then made alive, we are made alive and then buried. Who buries something to show that it is alive?

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). The word *form* refers to a mold or a cast into which something is poured to take its shape. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection is the mold, the essence of the gospel. It is when we obey that form — when we are buried with him in baptism, a likeness of what he did for us (vv. 5-6) — that we are freed from sin.

1 Peter 3:21 puts it bluntly: “baptism now saves you.” The verse explains how. It is not a matter of getting wet and washing off dirt. The act of baptism is an appeal to God to cleanse our consciences. It works through the resurrection of Christ. That act was the divine vindication of him, our proof that God accepted his sacrifice on our behalf. Jesus’ resurrection gives us confidence to approach God through his blood, “having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-23).

Peter said baptism does now save you. Modern preachers say baptism does not save you. Can you see the difference? Which do you believe?

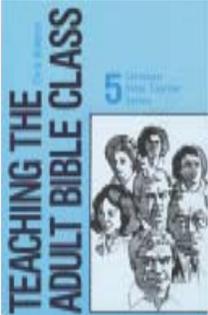
### CONCLUSION

Nothing in any of these texts gives the slightest hint that baptism is a profession of our salvation, an act to be done soon after we have been saved. No, the Scriptures all zero in on baptism as the moment at which men and women of faith are saved by the grace of God, the point at which we contact the precious blood of Jesus.

“And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). And as soon as you have been saved, start telling others about God’s gracious gift of salvation and what he requires to receive it.

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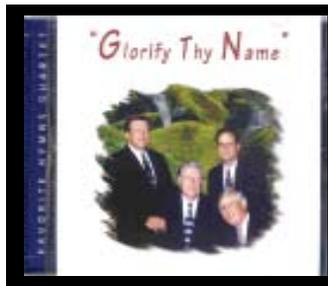
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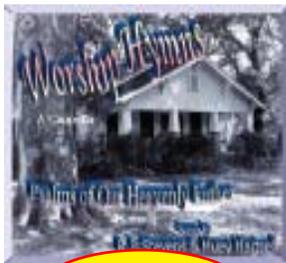
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# Instrumental Music in Worship

Harold Fite

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One of the more visible differences between churches of Christ and denominationalism is the music rendered in worship to God. The denominations sing and play musical instruments while churches of Christ sing *a cappella*. This is one of the unique features of the church of Christ. There is a trend, however, by some liberal brethren to introduce instrumental music into the worship. *A cappella* singing in churches of Christ is looked upon by the liberal mind as being just “custom.” They want to expand that “custom” to include the instrument, which they think will have a broader appeal to the world.

There are two kinds of authority: generic and specific. Generic authority involves that which is necessary in expediting the commands of God. We are to “teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God” (Col.3:16). Songbooks are incidental to the command to sing; they help in expediting the command to sing. We are to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel.” We can ride, walk, fly, etc. in carrying out this command. The method is not specified. Under generic authority we are at liberty to use methods to expedite the command as long as they are consistent with other Scriptures. “A generic command authorizes a performance of some act without giving directions as to the manner or method of its performance.” There is no generic authority for singing and playing in the Scriptures!

Specific authority is that which is specified; no choice is left to man. If God had told Noah to build the ark out of wood, Noah would have been at liberty to use the wood of his choice. But God specified gopher wood. Leaving Noah no choice (Gen. 6:14). In the matter of cleansing, God specified the ashes of a “red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke” (Num. 19:2). A black Angus wouldn’t do. It had to be a red heifer! In like manner we are to praise God in song. There are two kind of music: vocal and instrumental. If God had just said, “make music,” we would be at liberty to choose the kind of music we desire. But God has specified the kind of music

he wants in worship to him. He didn’t give us a choice. He specified singing (Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:30; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Jas. 5:13). We have specific authority to sing, but no authority to play upon an instrument in worship to God. If one worships God with a musical instrument, he does so without authority. “And whatsoever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17).

Authority is established in one of three ways: a command or direct statement (Acts 2:38); approved example (Acts 20:7); necessary inference (Matt. 3:16; Acts 20:7). All three are seen in the Lord’s supper. “This do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24); “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7); the first day of the week necessarily infers every first day (Sunday). A practice that cannot be proven by a command, approved example, or necessary inference is without authority and the practice should cease. There is no command, example or necessary inference to authorize instrumental music in worship.

Should one act upon the basis “where the Bible is silent we have liberty,” he acts presumptuously, presuming God is pleased when he has not expressed his mind on the subject. All we know about the will of God is what he has revealed through the Scriptures (1 Cor. 2:9-13). Would priests from Judah have been acceptable to God? “It is evident that our Lord has sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests” (Heb. 7:14). If silence of the Scriptures authorizes a practice, priests could have come out of Judah. What about our Lord? “Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law” (Heb. 8:4). Silence of the Scripture doesn’t authorize anything. *Silence does not give consent!* If it did we could have roast beef and iced tea on the table as a part of the Lord’s supper; sprinkling for baptism, etc. We are limited to the things that are written (1 Cor. 4:6). “And whatsoever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17).

# The Weekly Observance of the Lord's Supper

Mike Willis

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One of the distinctive marks of the first century church was its observance of the Lord's day which included its memorial feast to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. That which distinguished the church of the first century also is distinctive of the twenty-first century church in America. In this article, I will examine the biblical evidence for the observance of the first day of the week and the weekly observance of the Lord's supper.

## THE LORD'S DAY

The Old Testament law for the Israelites commanded that they "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8). Moses continued,

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Exod. 20:9-12).

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Instrumental music in worship violates the law of faith: "For we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Instrumental music is not a part of the faith; therefore, we cannot do it by faith. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). We cannot worship God in truth while playing on an instrument because instrumental music is not a part of truth. Instrumental music in worship to God violates the law of unity. We can be united on the command to sing. Division occurs when the instrument is introduced. The division occurs, not because of what the Scriptures say, but what they do not say. *A cappella* singing is not a "custom" to be disregarded in changing times. God has expressed his desire as to the kind of music he wants, and he has commanded vocal music.

The worship of God on the Sabbath was revealed to the Jews. Sacrifices were offered at the Tabernacle/Temple (Lev. 23:2-3; Num. 28:9-10). Strict laws pertaining to the observance of the Sabbath were put in place which included:

- No cooking (Exod. 16:21-27)
- No working (Exod. 31:15)
- No building a fire (Exod. 35:3)
- No gathering sticks (Num. 15:32)
- No buying or selling of goods (Neh. 13:15-18)
- No bearing burdens (Jer. 17:21)
- No travel (Exod. 16:29)
- Offer burnt offerings (Num. 28:9-10)
- Prepare shewbread (1 Chron. 9:32)

The punishment for violating Sabbath laws was death (Exod. 31:12-17; Num. 15:32-36).

A change occurred between the Old Testament worship and the New Testament worship in that the church did not observe the Sabbath day; rather it set aside the first day of the week for its weekly assembly (Col. 2:14-17).

Those who seek to worship God on an instrument does so without authority, practice that of which the Scriptures are silent, performs an act void of faith and truth, and becomes divisive in satisfying his own carnal desire.

Historically, the above arguments have been characteristic of gospel preachers. They have been tested on the platform of debate and have emerged in triumph. They cannot be successfully disputed. They will stand.

---

*P.O. Box 1699, Mountain View, Arkansas 72560*

The evidence showing that the first century church worshiped on the first day of the week is as follows:

**Acts 20:7.** “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). In the context of this chapter, Paul waits for six days for the church at Troas to assemble in spite of the urgency of his traveling plans. This passage indicates that Paul knew that the church would assemble on the first day of the week.

**1 Corinthians 16:1-2.** “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This passage does not command the church to assemble in order to take up a collection but to take up a collection at the customary weekly assembly. The phrase “first day of the week” is translated “the first day of every week” by the Revised Standard Version reflecting the distributive use of the preposition *kata* in the phrase *kata mian sabbatou*.

The regular assembly upon the first day of the week became a custom of the early church, so much that one who forsook the assembly was recognized as violating apostolic practice (Heb. 10:25). The first day of the week became known as the “Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10), no doubt because this was the day on which Jesus was raised from the dead (Matt. 28:1).

Extra-biblical sources also confirm that the early church assembled on the first day of the week for its worship. Pliny (A.D. 100) mentions that the Christians assemble on a “fixed day” for worship that involved hymns sung to Christ as God, binding oneself by an oath to live in moral purity, and to “reassemble to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind” (*The Letters of the Younger Pliny* 294). Justin Martyr (110-165) wrote, “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. . .” (*The First Apology to Justin* 67). Justin describes the assembly saying,

Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen. . . But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on

the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration (67).

From these evidences Christian scholars draw the near universal conclusion of all of Christianity (except the Seventh Day Adventists) that the church should assemble upon the first day of the week — Sunday.

### THE LORD’S SUPPER

The same evidences which are used to prove that the church should assemble for its worship on Sunday also prove that the church should partake of the Lord’s supper memorial on each Lord’s day. The evidence of Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians is adequate to prove to the Christian community that the church should assemble upon each Lord’s day, but for some reason most churches do not assemble each Lord’s day to do what the early church did when it assembled — to observe the Lord’s supper. The church at Troas came together on the first day of the week to break bread, a reference to the Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7) and we can only conclude that they did what they came together to do. The church at Corinth assembled on the first day of every week. In his discussion of the Lord’s supper at Corinth, Paul rebuked the saints for changing the Lord’s supper into a common meal, but in rebuking them he indicates that their purpose for assembly included the breaking of bread. He wrote, “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken” (1 Cor. 11:20-21). His rebuke reveals that they should have come together “to eat the Lord’s supper.”

The conclusion follows that the first century church assembled on the first day of every week for the purpose of observing the Lord’s supper. The New Testament evidence corresponds with the extra-biblical evidence that supports this conclusion.

### DENOMINATIONAL PRACTICE

The Roman Catholic Church observes mass on a daily basis, but the Protestant churches do not have a uniform practice in observing the Lord’s supper. Some observe the Lord’s supper once a month, once every six months, or once a year. Each church decides for itself what its practice will be. *The Standard Manual of Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox says, “As to the time, place, and frequency of the ordinances, no Scriptural directions are given. These are left option with the churches. They are usually observed on Sundays, but not necessarily. As to the Supper, our churches have very generally come to observe it on the first Sunday of every month” (20). The *Westminster Confession* does not speak of the frequency of partaking the Lord’s supper (chap. 29). In contrast, the Heidelberg Confession teaches

that the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments requires that one diligently attend church, “especially on the Lord’s day, to hear the Word of God, to participate in the holy Sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and to give Christian service to those in need” (Q. 103).

Among the ways that one could have distinguished the Lord’s church from the Jewish assemblies and the pagan assemblies in the first century was the observance of the Lord’s supper. Neither the Jews nor the pagans had any worship practice that was like the Lord’s supper. That was a distinctive mark of the Lord’s church. The same is true for today.

The American restoration movement called on men to restore the Lord’s supper to its biblical place — as a part of the weekly observance of the local church. One of the things which has distinguished the worship of nineteenth-twentieth century churches of Christ from the denominations around them has been its weekly observance of the Lord’s supper, just as it distinguished first century churches of Christ from Judaism and paganism. One of the ways of distinguishing the Lord’s church from Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Catholic and Protestant denominations is the practice of the weekly observance of the Lord’s supper. It is a distinctive mark of New Testament Christianity today just as it was in the first century!

Recently, the *Christian Standard* (June 27, 2004) published an interview with Gene Appel and Mike Breaux, two successful ministers of Christian Church mega-churches who had recently left their respective works to join the Willow Creek Community Church just outside Chicago.

The Willow Creek Church is nationally known because of Bill Hybels’ work (*The Purpose Driven Church*). Because of the differences in belief between the Willow Creek Community Church and the Christian Church on baptism and the Lord’s supper, interviewer Paul Boatman asked Appel and Breaux about both matters. Regarding the Lord’s supper, Appel said, “I guess you could say I treasure weekly Communion, but that is not a theological hill I would choose to die on” (413). In other words, Appel and Breaux have found a way to have “unity-in-diversity” on the subject of the Lord’s supper! Weekly observance of the Lord’s supper is an optional matter with them!

**CONCLUSION**

Man has no right to change the weekly observance of the Lord’s supper. When King Jeroboam I changed the feast days of ancient Israel, the writer of 1 Kings plainly stated, “this thing became a sin” (12:31). Man has no prerogative to tamper with divinely revealed worship. The Lord’s church has been distinctive in the past and is distinctive today in its weekly observance of the Lord’s supper. Those who wish to follow Scripture will continue to have weekly observance of the Lord’s supper.

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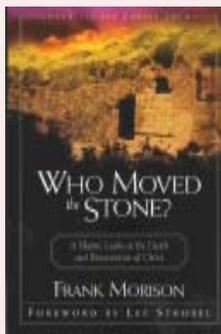
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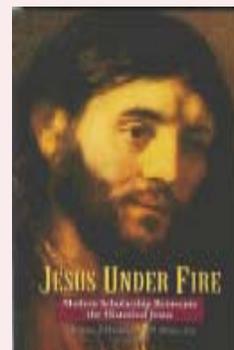
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# Free Will Offering

Donnie V. Rader

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**Several things should come to mind for the Christian who reflects upon this study.**

- **We are distinctive.**
- **We are serving the Lord in the Lord's way.**
- **What we give is of a free will.**
- **What funds we raise and spend are of a free will offering.**
- **Our giving should be of a cheerful heart (2 Cor. 9:6-7).**

The Lord's church is distinct. It differs from denominations in its nature, organization, name, worship, teaching, and practice. One of those distinctive marks is that the Lord's church has a free will offering. Two points need to be clear: (1) The only means of raising funds is a free will offering. (2) The free will offering is to be directed by the word of God.

In contrast, some denominations use other means of raising funds. Also, some practice a free will offering unscripturally.

## **OFFERING MUST BE AUTHORIZED**

**The need for authority.** We must have Bible authority for all that we do in religion. Christ is the head of the church (Col. 1:18). Thus, his church must follow his direction and lead. Paul said, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17). To act in the name of another is to act by his authority or power (Acts 4:7). Thus, we are to do all things by the authority of Jesus Christ.

**We must abide within the confines of the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).** The one who goes beyond the doctrine of Christ does not have God. Just as there was a pattern for building the tabernacle (which was a type or shadow of things to come), the real and true tabernacle has to be built according to the pattern (Heb. 8:5).

**Just as important.** The raising of funds is just as important as the spending of funds. The raising of funds must be scriptural just as the spending of funds must be authorized.

**The demand for funds.** Every church needs money to function. There is work to be done in evangelism, edification, and benevolence. All of that demands money. Some churches are engaged in works which not authorized, that demands even more money. We must not let the demand for more and more money cause us to seek some additional means of raising funds.

## **ONLY A FREE WILL OFFERING**

The way money was raised in the New Testament times was for Christians to give a free will offering. Let's notice a few passages that speak of such an offering.

**Acts 2:45:** "and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." Here individual Christians were selling things that belonged to them and giving (free will) so the needs of others could be met.

**Acts 4:32-37:** "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was

there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." Again, we see individual Christians selling property and bringing the proceeds (of their own free will) and laying it at the apostles' feet.

**Acts 11:28-30:** "Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." Here we have a case of individuals pooling their funds (of their own free will) and sending it (the offering) to the elders.

**1 Corinthians 16:1-2:** "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." Paul instructed the Corinthian brethren to give as they had been prospered.

**2 Corinthians 8:1-5:** "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of

the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God." The Macedonians are given as an example to the Corinthians. They were "freely willing" to the point that they urged the recipients to accept their offering.

**2 Corinthians 9:6-7:** "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." Obviously, one who gives cheerfully and not of necessity is one who gives a free will offering.

Notice how these passages do not tell the Christian how much to give (a certain amount), or mention anything about a billing, taxation, or matching of funds. Rather, each passage is either an example of or instructions for a free will offering.

The free will offering is to be: (1) as one has been prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2), (2) given bountifully and liberally (2 Cor. 9:6), (3) as he has purposed in his heart (2 Cor. 9:7), (4) done cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7), and (5) sacrificial (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

### SOME LIMITATIONS

There are two limitations placed upon the free will offering. It is not enough to have a free will offering, but it must be according the pattern God has laid down.

**Limited to the first day of the week.** The only day that is authorized for a collection is the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). There is no authority for taking an offering on another day.

**Every first day of the week.** The reference to the "first day" (1 Cor. 16:1-2) would mean every first day of the week just as the "remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8) meant every time the

Sabbath day came around. The NASV translates 1 Corinthians 16:2 as saying "first day of every week."<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to this, many churches have contributions on weekdays. Some bill their members so they can fund large projects. All types of sales (rummage sales, bake sales, brick or plaque sales) are used to raise church funds. Some churches have businesses, bingo games, etc. to have revenue to function.

### WHAT THIS MEANS TO US

Several things should come to mind for the Christian who reflects upon this study.

- We are distinctive.
- We are serving the Lord in the Lord's way.
- What we give is of a *free will*.
- What funds we raise and spend are of a free will offering.
- Our giving should be of a cheerful heart (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

May the Lord help us to follow his pattern in both raising and spending funds for his cause.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Upon the first day of the week *kata* (NT:2596) *mian* (NT:3391) *sabbatou* (NT:4521). *Kata* (NT:2596) has a distributive force, 'every' first day" (*Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

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408 Dow Dr., Shelbyville, Tennessee  
37160, donnie@truthmagazine.com

He who is born  
of God should  
grow to resem-

# Reconciled to God in One Church

Lewis Willis

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Reconciliation — the possibility and availability of it — is one of the great blessings and benefits of Christ and the gospel. Without it, man’s condition is painfully and tragically described: Sinners are without Christ, aliens and strangers, with no hope, and without God (Eph. 2:12). Through reconciliation, lost souls are made nigh to God (v. 13). This nearness is made possible by the blood of the cross. This unspeakably beneficial blessing is the message of the New Testament, and we explore it in this article. We begin by citing biblical evidence respecting this blessing.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were *reconciled* to God by the death of his Son, much more, being *reconciled*, we shall be saved by his life (Rom. 5:8-10).

And all things are of God, who hath *reconciled* us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of *reconciliation*; To wit, that God was in Christ, *reconciling* the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of *reconciliation*. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye *reconciled* to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

And that he might *reconcile* both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Eph. 2:16).

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to *reconcile* all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he *reconciled* in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight (Col. 1:20-22).

## DEFINITION

There is no dispute about the meaning of “reconciliation.” Thayer defines the word *katallasso* as “adjustment of a difference, reconciliation, restoration to favor . . . in the N. T., of the restoration of the favor of God to sinners that repent and put their trust in the expiatory death of Christ .

. . . we received the blessing of the recovered favor of God . . . return to his favor” (333). Of another form of the word, *apokatallasso*, in Ephesians 2:16, Vine calls it a “stronger form” of *katallasso*, “to change from one condition to another, so as to remove all enmity and leave no impediment to unity and peace” (261). *Zondervan’s Encyclopedia* adds, “Reconciliation is bringing again into unity, harmony, or agreement what has been alienated . . . there is need for reconciliation between God and man because of the alienation between them which has its source in human sin and the righteous aversion to it and hatred of it on the part of God (V, 44). Without heavenly assistance, man cannot effect or realize this recovery to the favor of the Lord.

## THE CAUSE OF ALIENATION

Isaiah clearly identifies the condition and cause of our difference with God. He wrote: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But *your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*” (Isa. 59:1-2). This is a universal problem. Paul said, “For *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). None can truthfully deny complicity in sin. John said, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1 John 1:8). Thus, through our decision to sin, we lose God’s favor and are alienated from him. Only through reconciliation can this dilemma find resolution.

## MAN IS RECONCILED TO GOD

Paul commanded the Corinthians, “*be ye reconciled to God*” (2 Cor. 5:20). Vine observes, “Not once is God said to be reconciled. The enmity is alone on our part. It was we who needed to be reconciled to God, not God to us” (261). Lenski wrote, “God and Christ do the reconciling, we are the objects” (*Commentary on the N.T., Eph.*, 443). Kittel expresses this same truth, “God is not reconciled, nor does he reconcile himself, but he himself reconciles us or the world to himself” (*Theological Dictionary of the N.T.* 41). “Sinners have lost fellowship with God” (Caldwell, *Truth Commentaries: Ephesians* 98). The only possible sense in which God might be alienated from sinful man is because

of his inherent goodness, holiness, and purity, coupled with his abhorrence of sin and evil. Sin, the cause of our separation from God, deserves his divine wrath, condemnation, and curse. Thus, sinful man is the cause and agent of this alienation. God has done nothing to bring forth this condition. God did not change from his essential holiness; it was man who move away; it is man who must return to recover the relationship he lost with God because of sin.

### IN ONE "BODY"

The apostle Paul identifies the *location* of reconciliation: ". . . that he might reconcile both unto God *in one body* by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:16). There is no way to honestly misunderstand where reconciliation takes place. One may not know what the "one body" is, but that is clearly and certainly where God positioned this blessing. Of course, one is not surprised when Paul tells his readers what he means by the expression "one body."

Speaking of the role God assigned to Christ, the apostle said, "(God) hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things *to the church which is his body*, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). Do not complicate or confuse the obvious! The *church* is "the *body*" in which reconciliation to God occurs. A significant fact, one which we dare not ignore, is that *unless one is in the Lord's church, he is not reconciled to God!* This same truth about the *church* being the *body* is stated in another passage: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). This point could not be stated more clearly.

Furthermore, Paul said man is reconciled in "one" body! Lest we be misled, after telling us that the church is the body, Paul emphatically affirms, "There is *one* body" (Eph. 4:4). The only logical conclusion is, in God's provision for reconciliation, there is *only one church* in which one can be reconciled!

### BY THE CROSS

By dying on Calvary's cross, Jesus made man's return to the favor of God possible. Paul said in Christ's death, Jesus presented the church (i.e., its members) ". . . holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight" (Col. 1:22). Zondervan says ". . . God Himself has provided the means of reconciliation through the death of His Son Jesus Christ" (*Op. Cit.* 44). To the Romans Paul wrote, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10). The judgment and justice of God respecting sin had to be satisfied, and this satisfaction was accomplished by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Our Savior bore the curse of our sins in our stead.

### THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION

God gave the "ministry" of reconciliation to the apostles, which they accomplished through the "word" of reconciliation. Salvation was offered to man through the gospel preached by the apostles (1 Cor. 15:1-2; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15). They preached reconciliation to God in the church, through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

There is a great irony here. In the first century world, when the apostles were preaching the word of reconciliation, the Jewish world stood condemned through their rebellion against God. At the same time, the Gentile world was alienated from God because of their pagan vices. Not only that, the "circumcised" looked with contempt upon the "uncircumcised." Christ came to reconcile both of these peoples unto God, in one body, the church. In Christ Jesus, Jews and Gentiles were expected to be "one" because the blood of Christ not only reconciled both to God, but it also was also intended to destroy the enmity between these people.

Sadly, man was not willing to accept the purpose of God. When the word of reconciliation, through the blood of the cross, was preached, it was not allowed to produce the fruit God intended. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a *stumblingblock*, and unto the Greeks *foolishness*" (1 Cor. 1:23). Modern men look with disdain upon the unbelief of first century men, yet they themselves reject the very means God provided for their redemption. The cross is disregarded. The "one body" has become thousands of warring sects, none of which is the body of the Lord. Contradictory and chaotic denominationalism cannot possibly be construed as the church of Christ. Even those who know the truth about reconciliation in the church, cannot cease from apostasy and sin! No one can be in fellowship with God, without also being in fellowship with his brethren who are also in the same body. Is it not time for us to look at this great truth since it affects what we are doing; how we are living and acting within the one body?

Man is *reconciled to God in one body*. Obey the "word of reconciliation" to enter that body. Then, live by that same rule to sustain a reconciled relationship with God.

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491 E. Woosdale Ave., Akron, Ohio 44301 lewiswillis@sbc-global.net



# Scriptural In Name

Tom Roberts

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For this cause I bow my knees unto the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Eph. 3:14-15).

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (1 Pet. 4:16).

... the churches of Christ salute you (Rom. 16:16, KJV).

With these passages before us, any Bible believer must be impressed with the scriptural identification of God's people. According to the apostle Paul, the family of God is *named* after Jesus Christ, our Lord (Eph. 3:14-15). Thus, "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Though it has been debated whether or not "Christian" was first used as a term of derision by the enemies of Jesus, "called" is the same word as used in Romans 7:3 where the unlawfully re-married woman is "called" an adulteress by inspiration. Thus, it is God's will that "Christian" is the name we wear religiously. Peter reminds us that we should not be ashamed of suffering as a Christian, but we should be willing to suffer "in this name" (ASV), "on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:16, KJV).

As early disciples began to teach the gospel to the lost, those who heard understood clearly the intent of the evangelists: they were discerned from the text, but Agrippa understood what Paul wanted him to be. He said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Paul was not trying to make him a Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, or other yet-to-be-invented religious name. Agrippa knew that Paul wanted him to be a Christian. Should there be any question about what we should be? Why not be just a Christian: nothing less, nothing more, nothing else?

Jesus prayed, not long before his crucifixion, that all disciples might be "one" (John 17:21). When we determine to "glorify God in this name," we make a huge step in the right

direction. But we are not "one" in doctrine and practice, so different religious names abound, dividing believers in Jesus into various denominations.

## DENOMINATIONS TODAY REQUIRE HYPHENATIONS

We are so accustomed to denominational names today that few are willing to use "Christian" as their only religious name. Sectarianism demands separate identity. Thus, while some claim to be Christians, they are "Baptist-Christians" or "Methodist-Christians" or "Assembly of God-Christians." Such names were unknown to first-century Christians because denominations did not exist. When the sin of sectarianism first arose among the Corinthians, the apostle Paul severely rebuked the practice. "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul" (1 Cor. 1:11-13). Paul was not willing that the Corinthians would divide themselves as "Pauline-Christians," or "Apollos-Christians" or "Cephas-Christians." Nor should Christians be divided today. However, as long as sectarianism prevails, none will be willing to be identified simply as "Christians." What a shame that the name from "whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" is not sufficient in a modern world that elevates division above unity.

## INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

It is obvious that disciples were known, individually, as Christians in apostolic times. But what were they known as in the congregational, or collective, sense? God did not intend that Christians remain as loose members, unattached to one another. Thus, those who were baptized were "added to them" (ASV) or "added to the church" (KJV, Acts 2:47) by the Lord. When Paul was converted, he "assayed to join himself to the disciples" (Acts 9:26). When a sinner obeys the gospel, he is saved by the Lord and added to the universal body of Christ (Heb. 12:23), as was the Ethiopian nobleman (Acts 8:27-39). But individual Christians need

the encouragement, edification, and fellowship of other Christians. These are found in a local church membership (Phil. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1-2; etc.). Individual Christians are incomplete without relationships with other Christians and God intended that this relationship would be satisfied in the local church. One individual is not a church (1 Cor. 12:12) but should seek to identify himself with a church. This allows and encourages the “one another” aspect of fellowship (Rom. 12:5, 10, 16; 13:8; 14:19, *et al*). In this relationship, individual Christians become a part of a local church.

Local churches were known as “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16), “church of God” (1 Cor. 1:2), or “the church” (3 John 9). In a given area, they were known as the “churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2) or the “church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess. 1:1). But each congregation was independent and autonomous under Christ, with no inter-congregational affiliations or controls (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). Denominational hierarchy did not exist, but was anticipated and warned against (Acts 20:28-30; 2 Thess. 2:3-4). There is no one name for the universal body of Christ as practiced by denominations today. While the Roman Catholic Church is composed of all the local Catholic Churches, and the Southern Association of Baptist Churches is composed of all the member churches of that denomination, etc., it is not so with churches of Christ. As a practical and pragmatic matter, most congregations identify themselves as a church of Christ, but this is not and cannot be enforced. Each can just as well be identified as a “church of God,” or “bride of Christ.” Voluntary and mutual identification of the church allows easy location when traveling and avoids confusion. However, some churches insist on an artificial difference by posting a sign reading “Christians Meet Here,” not recognizing that it does not address the congregational aspect of their identity. “Christians Meet Here” could be attached at your house address if more than one Christian lived there, but this ignores that a congregation is more than a plurality of saints involved in an action together. A congregation is a corporate entity designed to mature into a body of Christians with elders, deacons, and saints (Phil. 1:1). The phrase, “Christians Meet Here” (or something similar) sadly misses an accurate definition of a local body.

### CHURCH DESIGNATIONS IDENTIFY RELATIONSHIP

While individual saints are named “Christians,” the local church is not so named. There are various designations attached to the Lord’s people in Scripture and each such appointment describes a *relationship* sustained between Christ and his people. As a male person may be a man, husband, father, son, etc. (each describing a separate function of the same person), even so the church is seen from various aspects that describe elements of its identity.

The “church” is the called out people that belong to Christ (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; etc.). They are called out of

the world into a relationship with Jesus as their Savior.

As the “called out,” they are also “saints,” sanctified (set apart) to God’s service. They are holy and separate from the world (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

These same people are also the “kingdom” people. In this relationship, they accept Christ as their king and are a part of his kingdom (Matt. 4:17; Mark 9:1; Acts 2:32-36; 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9; etc.).

The church of Christ is, at the same time, the “church of God” (1 Cor. 1:2) because Christ is God and “purchased the church with his blood” (Acts 20:28).

A Christian is also a part of the “bride of Christ” (Matt. 25:1-10; John 3:29; Rev. 21:2) and this relationship emphasizes purity of the bride who is waiting for the bridegroom (Christ).

We are a “temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16) which allows God to dwell among his people.

We are a “vineyard” (Matt 20:1-16; 21:28-41) of Christ in that we are to work and be faithful to the Master of the vineyard, producing fruit for his glory.

We are the “body of Christ” (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-27; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4; 5:23; Col. 1:18) in that we are, individually, members of the body with Christ as our head.

### A NEW NAME TO BE GIVEN

It is a singular honor to wear the name of Christ, to be a Christian. It is wonderful to be involved with the Lord in those relationships that allow us to be a part of his body, to be indwelt as his temple, to be a part of the bride of Christ and to anticipate the consummation in heaven throughout eternity. If wearing the name of Christ included all this, it would be more than sufficient. However, John reveals that Christ has something else in store for us: a “new name” that will only be revealed in heaven. When writing to the seven churches of Asia, John told those at Philadelphia that they should strive to overcome. If successful, Jesus promised to the one who persevered, “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Rev. 3:12-13). We are not told what the new name of Jesus will be, but if we understand that every name given to God’s people indicates a relationship, we can be sure that the new name that will be given to us promises a new relationship to Christ, even greater than the one we now enjoy as Christians.

We do well to be satisfied with the biblical and scriptural

# The Organization of the Church

Dick Blackford

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No entity can function without some kind of organization. There are responsibilities to be met that require authority (someone in charge) and delegating of responsibilities. In the universal church, Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22, 23). Jesus Christ has absolute authority (Matt. 28:18). He is the only legislator. He never delegated legislative authority to anyone. He never appointed a man to be his visible representative, such as a pope claiming to be the “vicar of Christ.” Jesus *still is* the head of his church. There is no earthly headquarters as is the case with many denominations, such as: Salt Lake City (Mormon Church), Rome, Italy (Catholic Church), Cleveland, Tennessee (Church of God), Springfield, Missouri (Assemblies of God), etc. Not only is Jesus still the head of his church, its headquarters is still in heaven. Therefore, nobody can run the church universal on earth. God gave no organizational structure for activating the universal church.

## GOD’S ORGANIZATION

Many examples can be cited where God “chose the foolish things of this world that he might confound the wise” (1 Cor. 1:27). Conquering Jericho by marching around the walls would be totally foreign to the wisdom of men (Josh. 6). Though there was no known cure, dipping seven times in the Jordan to heal leprosy would never have been a recommended procedure (2 Kings 5). And though there was no medical procedure to heal blindness, spitting on the ground, making clay and applying it to one’s eyes and ordering him to wash in the pool of Siloam would never have been considered in a million years (John 9). These kinds

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name given to us as Christians. Let us determine to wear none other. “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:16).

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15801 Spring Crest Cr., Tampa, Florida 33624

of examples could be multiplied numerous times in which God chose the foolish things of this world to confound the worldly wise. It pleased God through the “foolishness of preaching” (used accommodatively as viewed by the world) to save those who believe (1 Cor. 1:21).

Our topic on God’s organization for the church is another of those numerous examples where God chose the unexpected, unimpressive and the simple instead of the complex structures of men. Elders to oversee, feed the flock, and watch for souls in each congregation; deacons as special servants to assist in any way the elders need them, along with the cooperation of all the saints in that congregation, has never impressed the masses of religious people (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). Independent congregations not tied together in some type of superstructure (synod, association, conference, convention, missionary society, “sponsoring church” organization, etc.), has not impressed them either. Men have continually tried to improve on God’s simple form of organization. Most major apostasies have come through a corruption of the organization which God gave the church.

## CONFUSED TERMS

Elders can decide the methods (“how”) to evangelize (gospel meetings, radio, television, newspapers, bulletins, correspondence courses, web sites, etc.), *or*, when they are dissatisfied with God’s arrangement they can turn it over to a superstructure known as a “sponsoring church” (unknown to the New Testament) and let *it* decide the methods. Carefully observe that the “sponsoring church” is not a method but an organization which decides the methods which the local church could have and should have decided had this superstructure never been dreamed up. Because the words “elders” and “church” are used, that makes it sound scriptural to some if they haven’t carefully examined the Scriptures without bias. But when one examines the Scriptures he sees that scriptural terms are being used in an unscriptural way. When local elders assume oversight of a multi-church project (involving thousands of churches) they then become more than just local elders. To continue to use scriptural terms (“elders” and “church”) in an unscriptural way be-

comes deceptive To call them “elders” in a function God never gave elders is a misnomer. God never placed elders over a multi-church project or a segment of the brotherhood other than the church which is “among you” (1 Pet. 5:3, 4; Acts 20:28).

We may call the “president” and “vice president” (national officers) by the terms “sheriff” and “deputy” (local officers), but just because we call these national officers by local terms does not make them so any more than calling a dog’s tail a leg makes it a leg.

In the New Testament, when funds were sent to another congregation, it was always because the receiving congregation was “in want” (2 Cor. 8:14). A congregation is “in want” when it lacks the means of self-maintenance, not when it assumes world obligations beyond its ability. There is no Bible authority for many congregations sending alms to an affluent church where no condition of “want” exists. “Sponsoring churches” may want, but they are not “in want.”

Concerning the work of edification and benevolence of a local church, again, a congregation can decide all the methods to be used in meeting its responsibilities. But it has no authority to turn the decision making over to another organization which will decide the methods of edification and benevolence (such as a brotherhood Sunday School organization or a college or a benevolent society with its board of directors). These organizations will have to make the same decisions regarding methods and administer funds that the local church could and should have made and administered.

**WISDOM IN GOD’S PLAN**

A single independent local church may function in its

purpose before God even if there was not another congregation in existence. In order for some subversive force to overtake local churches of Christ, it would be necessary for each congregation to be infiltrated by false teachers, since there is no pyramid structure. But where there is an unscriptural superstructure, such as a “headquarters” or a “sponsoring church,” all that would be necessary would be to infiltrate the top of the pyramid. The “rank and file” become powerless to affect change. This has been evident in some churches that have ordained homosexuals to their ministries. The “rank and file” may voice opposition but they are powerless to stop decisions that are made at the top of the pyramid and still remain in the organization. Similar things have happened with the organizations founded by some electronic evangelists. This has also been true in the unscriptural “sponsoring church” arrangement. When supporters for the “Herald of Truth” (sponsored by the Highland church in Abilene, Texas) became concerned over soft soap preaching on the program and neglect of a distinctive message, they were unable to stop it.

**CONCLUSION**

The children of Israel were dissatisfied with God’s simple arrangement of judges to lead and guide the people. Impressed with the kings of other nations, they cried, “Make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). When Samuel grieved over this, God told him “they have not rejected thee but they have rejected me” (v. 7). Let us be content with God’s simple arrangement for the organization of the church. To reject God’s way is to reject God.

*P.O. Box 3032, State University, Arkansas 72467 rlb612@aol.com*

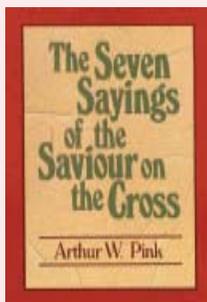


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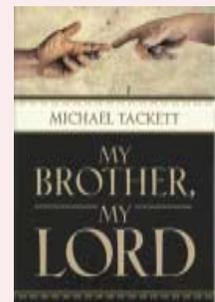


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## “One Savior” continued from front page

Jesus died for the salvation of all men, Calvinism claims Jesus died only for the elect. Article 8 of the Canons of Dort states that the “quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend *to all the elect*, for bestowing upon *them alone* the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring *them* infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, *all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation*” (C.A. Feenstra, *Calvinism In The Light Of God’s Word* 43). The Bible says Jesus died for all men. Calvinism, the background behind the creeds of many Protestant denominations, says he died only for the elect.

Truth has a way of moving men to act. In 1903, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church modified chapter iii of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* by stating, “Christ’s propitiation was for the sins of the whole world” (*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* 326). Men need not produce an updated creed for all to know this truth. John wrote it in 1 John 2:1. No creed of man is needed. All can know, believe and be united upon the revealed word of God. Never give up on the idea that men can be united in the revealed teaching of God’s word. One error of man was changed to agree with God’s word, why can’t all? They can, when men are satisfied to only speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). Thus minded, men will not need man’s creeds, for their only source for belief will be the harmonious truth of the Bible.

Contemplating a Savior drives us to ask, “Saved from what?” The Scriptures make it clear that our Savior is Jesus Christ, and he “gave Himself that He might redeem us from all iniquity” (Tit. 2:14). “Jesus” is his appropriate name for “it is He that shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). He came “to seek and to save that which is lost.” Lost in what? Sin is the Bible answer (cf. Luke 19:7, 9-10). Being lost in sin means being also dead in sin, a condition

that cries out for help to the eager ear of Heaven (Luke 15:1, 21, 24). The one Savior for the lost is the same savior who saves us from our deadly trespasses (Rom. 6:23; 4:25; Eph. 2:1, 5). Only the one burdened with the horrors of being lost, and with the helplessness in overcoming death is ready to exclaim with thanksgiving, “Oh, what a Savior!”

This spiritual message of our Savior’s mission to save man from sin seems to have taken a back seat in many religious groups today. You would think Jesus came to save us from boredom when reading church advertisements for “fun festivals” and by looking at all the basketball courts and “Family Life Centers” crowding the landscape of churches. If so, the first century churches under the guidance of the inspired apostles did not get the message, for at no time did they appeal to the lost with “fun and games.” You would think Jesus came foremost to save us from hunger and poverty when listening to the themes emphasized by many TV preachers. If so, was Paul not connected to his Savior during those periods when he was “hungry” and “in want” (Phil. 2:12). You would think that the promise of being healed from physical diseases was your definite blessing from Jesus’ death, instead of being healed from the spiritual consequences of sin when listening to some preachers expound on 1 Peter 1:24-25. If so, did Paul mistakenly not appeal to the healing stripes of our Lord, or was Trophimus, Paul’s close traveling companion, in unbelief (Acts 20:4; 21:29) when Paul left him “at Miletus sick” (2 Tim. 4:20)? The one Savior saves us from the guilt of sin and its consequence of death (Heb. 9:14; Rom. 6:23). Being saved by the Savior offers no immunity from physical hunger, poverty, or sickness. Neither does the one Savior need a “fun festival” to heighten interest in his saving work.

Jesus is “the savior of the body,” the church (Eph. 5:23; 1:23). Some believe that members of distinct denominational bodies will be saved. Where do you read in the Bible of such a promise? Jesus is not the Savior of man-made religious “bodies” but “the body” which is his church. The New Testament plainly teaches us that when men and women are being saved, the Lord adds them to the church (Acts 2:47). There is only one baptism connected with the one Lord and Savior (Eph. 4:5). The one baptism bringing us “into Christ” is the same baptism bringing us into “one body” (Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13). Dear reader, do not ever think the church is not important. It was important enough for the Savior to purchase it with his own redeeming blood (Acts 20:28). The word of God clearly states the one Savior is the Savior of the one body, which is his church. Are you in this one body, comprising the saved, or are you in a church that Jesus has never promised to save?

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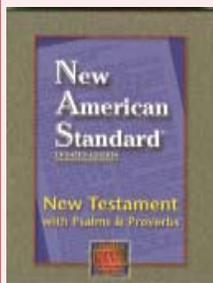
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## “Divine Covenants” continued from page 2

and said, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” Fornication is the one exception to this rule (Matt. 19:3-9). Infidelity and unscriptural divorce are both counted as violations of this sacred covenant (Prov. 2:16-19; Mal. 2:14-16).

### GOD’S COVENANT WITH NOAH

God made a covenant with Noah to never again destroy the world by water, and confirmed it with the sign of the rainbow (Gen. 9:8-17). Instead, the present heavens and earth are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pet. 3:3-7).

### GOD’S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

Three great promises were made to Abraham: God said, “I give you the land of Canaan; I will make of you a great nation; in your seed, all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). These promises were confirmed, first by means of a dreadful vision (Gen. 15:5-21), and subsequently by the sign of circumcision (Gen. 17:1-14).

### GOD’S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

God’s covenant with Israel was instituted at Mt. Sinai/Horeb (Exod. 34:27-32; Deut. 5:1-5; 1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chron. 5:10; etc.). It was ratified with the blood of animal sacrifices (Exod. 24:3-8; Ps. 50:5; Heb. 9:18-20). It was renewed at various times in Israelite history — by Moses (Deut. 29:1), Joshua (Josh. 24:25), Jehoiada the priest (2 Kings 11:17-18; 2 Chron. 23:16), and King Josiah (2 Kings 23:1-3; 2 Chron. 34:31-32).

### GOD’S MESSIANIC COVENANT

The prophets also foreshadowed the establishment of the Messianic Covenant. Concerning his chosen servant, God said, “I will appoint you as a covenant to the people (Isa. 42:1-7, esp. v. 6; see also 49:6-8). Jeremiah prophesied of a “new” and “everlasting” covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:36-40; 50:4-5).

God’s promises to Israel were conditional: If they were faithful, God would bless them; if they were wicked, he would curse them. However, even if physical Israel proved faithless and suffered the consequences of a broken covenant, God’s plan and purpose would not fail. There would be a faithful remnant through which God would honor his promises. With them, he would make a new covenant. His law would be written on their hearts. In the last days, the Messiah would reign upon the throne of David. In those days, worship would be purified and peace would be established.

John the Baptist was the messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 3:1-3). Jesus is the mediator of a new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:22-24).

In contrast with the Old Covenant, which was inferior, enslaving, and temporal, the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ is better, liberating, and eternal. Note the following distinctions between these two covenants: First vs. Second (Heb. 8:7-8; 9:1-5); Old vs. New (2 Cor. 3:5-6, 14); Inferior vs. Better (Heb. 1:3-4; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34); Slavery vs. Liberty (Gal. 4:21-28); Temporal vs. Eternal (Isa. 55:3; 61:8; Eph. 2:13-16; Col. 2:13-14; Heb. 8:13; 13:20-21).

### CONCLUSION

Today some brethren are advocating the theory that there is but One Eternal Covenant. During the Mosaic Dispensation, God accepted divorce and remarriage for causes other than fornication (see Deut. 24:1-4). Allegedly, that covenant continues in force. He accepts the same during the gospel age. Therefore, one cannot bind Matthew 19:9 as an exclusive pattern, nor can one say that polygamy is morally wrong.

However, the aforementioned passages clearly distinguish between the Old and the New Covenants. The Law of commandments contained in ordinances has been abolished (Eph. 2:13-16). The certificate of debt has been taken out of the way and nailed to the cross (Col. 2:13-14).

Christ is the theme of both covenants (Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 3:18-26). Yet, a clear distinction remains. In the Old Testament Christ is presented in shadow. In the New Testament Christ is revealed in substance. In the Old Testament Christ is presented in pictures. In the New Testament Christ is revealed in person. In the Old Testament Christ is presented in type. In the New Testament Christ is revealed in truth. In the Old Testament Christ is presented in ritual. In the New Testament Christ is revealed in reality. In the Old Testament Christ is presented prophesied. In the New Testament Christ is revealed present. In the Old Testament Christ is implicitly revealed. In the New Testament Christ is explicitly revealed (Geisler & Nix 21).

The Old Testament was ratified with the blood of animals (Exod. 24:3-8; Ps. 50:5; Heb. 9:16-20). The New has been established with the blood of Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:27-28; Mark 14:23-24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:16-28; 12:22-24).

Have you been washed in the blood of Jesus (Eph. 5:25-27; Tit. 3:3-7; Rev. 7:14; 22:14)? Have you been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38; 22:16)? Have you submitted to the terms of God’s new and better covenant? Have you been obedient to the last will and testament of Jesus Christ?

### Sources

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Geisler, N.L., & W.E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible. Rev. and Expanded.* Chicago: Moody Press, c1986, 1996.  
Louw, J.P., & E.A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based On Semantic Domains Electronic ed. of the 2nd Edition.* New York: United Bible societies, c1989, 1996.

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## Preachers Needed

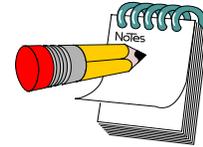
**Chester, Virginia:** The Chester Church of Christ in Chester, Virginia is looking for a full-time evangelist. The average attendance is about 45-50 and they are made up primarily of families with school age children. They do not have elders at the present time. Partial to full support is available depending on the specific need.

Chester is located between Richmond and Petersburg. The population of the metropolitan area is over 1 million. There are plenty of opportunities for the gospel to be preached in this area and they are looking for a faithful evangelist to help us in this effort. Please contact John Riley at (804) 497-3638, jariley100@aol.com, Mike Marshall at (804) 530-0648, or Robert Smith at (804) 270-3842.

**Hayesville, North Carolina:** The Shooting Creek church in Hayesville needs of full-time preacher to help with personal work. This is a growing area. They are debt free and have many

visitors. They are few in number, but sound and strong in the faith. The preacher will need some outside support. If interested, please contact Charles Nicks at 828-389-8735 or Ned Hicks at 828-369-9378.

## Quips & Quotes



### Jewish Group Protests Posthumous Baptisms

“Salt Lake City — Researchers say that Mormons have continued to posthumously baptize Jewish Holocaust victims into their faith despite a promise to discontinue the practice.

“We are very hopeful that we will be able to convince the church to stop,” Ernest Michel, chairman of the New York-based World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, said Friday.

“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has long collected names from government documents and other records worldwide for posthumous baptisms. Church members stand in to be baptized in the names of the deceased non-Mormons, a ritual the church says is required for them to reach heaven” (The Indianapolis Star [April 10, 2004], A4).

### Same-Sex Couples Sue on Marriage Law

“Thirteen same-sex couples sued the state of New York on Wednesday seeking to have the state law that denies gay and lesbian couples the right to marry declared unconstitutional. Plaintiffs include state Assembly member Daniel O’Donnell and

## Revision of Church Directory

The Guardian of Truth Foundation is preparing a new edition of its church directory. We would like to request our readers to review the listing of their congregation (and others for which one has accurate information) to verify that we have the correct information published. With new area codes being given to different regions of the country and the changing of postal addresses (with 911 mailing information), this information sometimes changes. Unless someone informs us of these changes, the information becomes outdated and visitors who are depending upon our directory to attend services have trouble finding the meeting house.

Send any changes to mikewillis1@attglobal.net or call 1-800-428-0121 to make any changes that are needed.

his partner of 23 years, John Banta. The NYCLU, the American Civil Liberties Union and a private law firm are representing the plaintiffs” (Akron Beacon Journal [April 8, 2004], A34).

#### Episcopal Diocese Deals With Contribution Drop

“Norfolk, Va. — The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia has cut about \$400,000 from its budget this year to offset a drop in donations — largely from parishes upset by the denomination’s first openly gay bishop. As much as two-thirds of the revenue drop may stem from conservatives withholding contributions in protest of New Hampshire Bishop V. Gene Robinson, who has lived with his male partner for years” (The Indianapolis Star [April 24, 2004], F3).

#### They Pray, But Going to Church is Different

“Seattle — The Pacific Northwest is considered the least churchgoing region in the country, but a new poll says more than half of Washington state residents pray at least once a day. The survey released by The Seattle Times found that 53 percent of residents said they pray at least once a day and 31 percent prayed several times a day.

“Nationwide, in a CBS/New York Times poll conducted in February, 36 percent of people said they prayed several times daily. ‘I think praying and churchgoing are two separate categories,’ said Patricia O’Connell Killen, chairwoman of the religious department at Pacific Lutheran University. ‘Prayer is associated with an individual’s own spiritual journey. And increasingly in this region, as well as nationally, spiritual journey is disconnected from churchgoing or institutional affiliation’” (The Indianapolis Star [April 24, 2004], F3).

#### Methodist Court Won’t Revisit Case of Lesbian Pastor

“Pittsburgh — The top United Methodist court ruled Tuesday that it does not have the authority to review the case of an openly lesbian pastor who was acquitted of violating church law.

“The ruling from the Judicial Council came in the case of the Rev. Karen Dammann, a Washington state minister who acknowledged she was in a committed relationship with a woman.

“A jury of 13 pastors outraged conservatives in March by acquitting Dammann of practices contrary to Christianity at her church trial in Bothell, Wash. The jurors effectively ruled that church law did not make it a chargeable offense for gay clergy to be sexually active.

“Conservatives called the verdict a ‘schismatic act.’ When the Methodist General Conference began last week, delegates turned to the denomination’s high court and asked it to enforce the church ban on ordaining homosexuals” (The Indianapolis Star [May 5, 2004], A3).

#### Methodist conservatives Propose Split Over Gay Issues

“Pittsburgh — United Methodist evangelicals said Thursday that their church should split after three decades of discord over homosexuality, signaling a deep rift in the nation’s third-largest denomination.

“Their proposal, at the Methodist national policy meeting, reflected frustration that years of debate over gay-related issues have diverted the 8.3-million-member church from its broader mission. . . .

“The announcement came after conservatives prevailed in maintaining the church’s firm stand against homosexuality.

“Delegates affirmed that gay sex was ‘incompatible with Christian teaching’ and made it a chargeable offense under church law for clergy to conduct same-sex marriages and for unmarried ministers to have sex.

“However, evangelicals expect that those who want a broader role for gays and lesbians in the church will continue to defy church law and appoint sexually active homosexual clergy” (The Indianapolis Star [May 7, 2004], A5).

#### Justices Decline to Stop Same-sex Nuptials

“Washington — The Supreme Court refused Friday to block the nation’s first state-sanctioned gay marriages from taking place next week.

“The justices declined without comment to intervene and block clerks from issuing marriage licenses to gay couples in Massachusetts. That state’s highest court ruled in November that the state constitution allows gay couples to marry and declared that the process would begin Monday.

“The Supreme Court’s decision, in an emergency appeal filed Friday by gay-marriage opponents, does not address the merits of the claim that the state Supreme Judicial Court overstepped its bounds with the landmark decision.

“A stay had been sought by a coalition of state lawmakers and conservative activists” (The Indianapolis Star [May 15, 2004], A4).



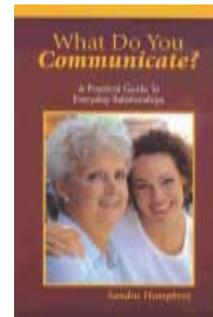
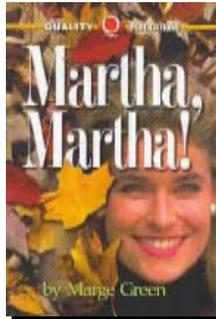
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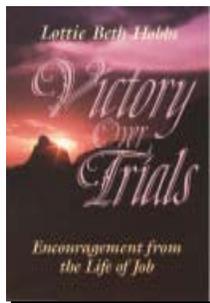


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