

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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CAN WE KNOW?

Bob Spurlin

We cannot know the time of our death, the date of the second coming of Christ or the date of Christ's birth. We do know that life "is a vapor" (James 4:14), the time of the second coming "no man knoweth" (Matt. 24:36), and the date of Christ's birth is unknown. We know the Savior would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and that Isaiah prophesied a "virgin would conceive and bear a son" (Isa. 7:14). Matthew, the Gospel writer seven centuries later, shows the fulfillment in Jesus according to prophecy (Matt. 1:21-23). Coming to grip with the unknown can be a frustrating exercise, but take heart as the scripture states: *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever"* (Deut. 29:29).

We live in an age of relativism and doubt with a culture surrendering biblical truth for whatever is fashionable. Is it possible for us to KNOW anything? A recent survey of religious leaders shows a glaring disbelief in the most fundamental truths of Holy Scripture. Some contend that we cannot know anything for certain, and that truth is relative. Jesus said, *"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). The activists promoting relativism says in effect, "what may be truth for one may not be truth for another." Some are so certain that nothing is certain that it makes one wonder how they can be so certain!

OBSERVE THE THINGS WE CAN KNOW:

1. We Can Know That God Exists. We are mindful of philosophers and theologians debating the existence of God over the span of centuries. Various points of view have been advanced by theists, and atheists, and probably no issue has caused more intellectual discussion. The existence of God is the most important of all discussions by the human family.

The evidence of an omnipotent God is found both inside and outside the Bible record. Our purpose is not an examination of the evidences, but to lay a foundation that knowledge of God's existence is possible. It is obvious that for anything to be known about God it must first be known that God exists. Paul underlines this basic principle in Romans 1:18-21 — that God's existence was known to the Gentiles. In verse 19 we read, *"because that which is known of God is manifest in them"* — literally meaning that which is capable of being known. How is God known? Paul affirms in verse 20, *"through the things that are made."* We may logically and truthfully reason certain facts about God through the things that are made (Psa. 19:1). Logically, it is understood that a watch has a maker, a house has a builder, and a computer has a designer. The Bible states: *"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God"* (Heb. 3:4). There is sufficient evidence in the natural world for a valid conclusion of the existence of

God. The Hebrew writer states: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb. 11:1). Belief or faith is predicated upon evidence. While we were not present in the beginning and did not see with our eyes the actual creation of the world, the proof in nature and testimony of the Scriptures give us essential information upon which to base our faith. Paul affirms that man is without excuse in denying the existence of God because sufficient evidence is before us (Rom. 1:18-20).

2. We Can Know The Bible Is The Word Of God. To build upon this premise is to affirm the Bible's inspiration. Paul writes, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God..."* (II Tim. 3:16). Approximately 2,500 times, the Bible declares it's inspiration through phrases like: *"The word of the Lord came unto me saying"* (257), *"God spake unto me"* (13), *"And the Lord said unto him"* (221), etc. The aforesaid statements verify the Bible's inspiration. How can one discount the internal evidence of the Holy Scriptures when it conveys historical, geographical, scientific, philosophical, and medical references? The Bible does not claim to be a book of history, book of science or a book of medicine, but when such references appear, it does so with extraordinary accuracy. Since the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God, it follows that it, and it alone, must be our authority for all that we practice in

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Can We Know?...



Guest Editorial

GOD'S PEOPLE NEED NOT FEAR

Marvin L. Weir

Many people make the tragic mistake of placing their trust in this world and worldly things. The apostle John warned, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17). The apostle Peter affirms that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Peter 3:10). One who places his trust in this world and worldly things has every reason to be afraid!

God's people, however, have no reason to be afraid as they live the Christian life. Those who choose to place their trust in God by obeying the Gospel and continuing to "walk in the light" (I John 1:7) need not have a fearful spirit. Let us take heart as we reflect on several eternal principles taught by Isaiah.

God's people need not fear, because they have been redeemed. Isaiah wrote, "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isa. 43:1). Two tremendous truths are of comfort in this verse of scripture.

First, God has redeemed us. Man's sins separated him from God (Isa. 59:1-2). But the death of the Savior made redemption possible. Paul, speaking of Christ, says, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). Christians do not fear death nor the future because they have been redeemed!

Second, God has called us. Because of God's love and grace, the Gospel is available for all. The apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that all who are called of God are called "by the gospel" (II Thess. 2:14).

God's people need not fear, because God has promised to be with them. Isaiah stated, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:2). The fellowship available to the child of God is a wonderful thing. The early Christians "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The apostle John encouraged the saints by writing, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:6-7). The writer of Hebrews assures us that Christ "will in no wise fail or forsake us" (Heb. 13:5).

God's people need not fear, because they have been created for the glory of God (Isa. 43:7). God does not expect the impossible or give us tasks we cannot accomplish. Man has a purpose as he lives life on this earth and it is a glorious one. He is to live his life in such a way that God will be glorified! Those who do so have nothing to fear.

A Christian should never forget the tremendous promises and words of encouragement uttered by the apostle Paul in the eighth chapter of Romans. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's

elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:31-39).

God's people need not fear as no one can keep them from obtaining victory in Jesus!

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One of the most difficult things I find to accept as I grow older, having preached the gospel now for well over fifty years, is to see churches and brethren that I have known, with whom I have labored, to whom I have preached, both as regular preacher or in gospel meetings, and see them now defiantly set aside the truth we once upheld together, and see them seek to be like the nations round about, and act as if truth had never been their first love.

—James W. Boyd

IS IT OKAY TO USE THE THOUGHT OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT TO MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO SERVE THE LORD?

Roger D. Campbell

In society, citizens are reminded by government officials that they will be punished if they break civil law. In the home, children are reminded by parents that they will be punished if they do not obey their parents. In school, students are reminded that they will be punished if they break the rules of the school or teacher. We understand that the thought of punishment does, indeed, serve as a detriment to wrong conduct. But what about in the spiritual realm? Is it proper to try to motivate people to serve the Lord by pointing out that eternal punishment awaits the disobedient? Let us consider some facts.

1) *Jesus taught about punishment for the ungodly.*

Jesus said, “*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (Matt. 10:28). Jesus spoke those words to His apostles as He was preparing to send them out to preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words says that in Matthew 10:28 the word “destroy” [Greek, *apollumi*, as in “destroy both soul and body in hell”] means “the loss of well-being in the case of the unsaved hereafter.”

Would you be surprised to know that even in His masterful “Sermon on the Mount,” the Christ twice spoke about being “cast into hell” (Matt. 5:29,30) and once about being “in danger of hell fire” (Matt. 5:22)?

In another instance the Master spoke about “the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29), and once told some Jewish leaders that they “shall receive the greater damnation” (Matt. 23:14).

Yes, Jesus used punishment, even punishment in hell, as a means of trying to motivate people to do that

which is right in God’s sight.

2) *Inspired first-century preachers preached to lost people about punishment for those that do not obey God.*

After exhorting his Jewish listeners to repent and be converted, the apostle Peter spoke of the Messiah in these terms: “*For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*” (Acts 3:22,23). To say that one “shall be destroyed” for not hearing the Christ points to punishment.

While preaching in a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, the apostle Paul, spoke about justification through Jesus. He then warned his listeners, “*Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you*” (Acts 13:40,41). Inspired by the Spirit, Paul quoted from Habakkuk 1:5, which in the context, deals with the punishment that God would deal out to the Jews. Thus, Paul’s “beware” statement that is recorded in Acts 13:40,41 points to punishment for those that do not believe in the Christ.

From the two examples noted above it is obvious that the apostles, as a means of motivating people to serve the Lord faithfully, preached about the punishment of those that do not follow Jesus.

3) *Inspired penman of the New Testament taught about future punishment for the unrighteous.*

“*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be*

revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (II Thess. 1:7-9). What about those that do not obey righteousness? They shall receive “*indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*” (Rom. 2:8,9). These truths remind us that for the disobedient, “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31).

Yes, the horrible thought of being lost is a strong motivator to right thinking people, is it not?

4) *The punishment that awaits the wicked is eternal in nature.*

We point this out as a separate fact simply because the question we are answering is, “Is it okay to use the thought of eternal punishment to motivate people to serve the Lord?” We have clearly shown that the Christ, first-century preachers, and the writers of the New Testament at times used punishment as one form of motivation to convince people to obey God. But what about the “eternal” aspect of punishment? Does the New Testament teach such a concept? As we have already noted, when the Christ comes again, some “*shall be punished with everlasting destruction*” (II Thess. 1:9). We also recall that Jesus said that some “*shall go away into everlasting punishment*” (Matt. 25:46).

Yes, the punishment of hell is eternal in nature, a place where “the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43,44,45,46,48).

5) *Jesus taught about punishment, but not about punishment only.*

The Master warned both His fol-

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religion. Peter would charge every man, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* (I Peter 4:11). The evidence is sufficient to cause one to accept the fact that the Bible is God's word. The Bible is here and no one doubts its existence. But how can we account for it? The Bible is beyond the reach of human authorship. Man would not have written it if he could. It condemns too many things which men by nature hold dear. The only conclusion that can be reasonably made is that it is indeed God's inspired word.

3. We Can Understand The Bible Alike. If we could not understand the Bible, then God failed in His mission to deliver an inspired document conveying the message intended for mankind. If we cannot understand the Bible, and know that we understand, it is of no value to the human family. The critics of this marvelous book claim it is egotistical to assert we can know the truth. Jesus states unequivocally, *"If ye abide in my word then are ye my disciples, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31-32). Where is the value in God's message if it is confusing and disjointed to the reader? Jesus' words are unmistakable that men and women can know the truth. The truth is not a restricted message for the intellectual or academia, but universal for all (Matt. 28:19-20; 11:28-30).

Jesus spoke to the most sophisticated religious leaders of his day and challenged their traditions (Matt. 15:3-9). Yet, the Gospel writer made the observation: *"And, the common people heard him gladly"* (Mark 12:37). Those hearing Jesus, the regular, common, everyday person, gladly received his word, having little difficulty in understanding.

A basic and fundamental principle from the Bible is that God expects us to learn from what has been written. Faith is based upon hearing and understanding the Bible (Rom. 10:17). There is no other way faith can come. Paul plainly states, *"Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* (Eph. 3:4). He did not say when you read, you might or could understand. He

boldly stated *"Whereby when ye read, ye may understand..."* (Eph. 3:4). Paul once more says, *"Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Eph. 5:17). The implication is clear that a person is foolish if he fails to understand the will of the Lord. In fact, he says such people have *"their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart"* (Eph. 4:18). This understanding produces a common faith and a common obedience (Jude 3).

Paul sent Timothy to teach the same things he taught: *"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus...who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church"* (I Cor. 4:17). Please take note that Paul taught the same thing in every church. This fundamental principle underlines the Bible's teaching. If the Bible's message is not understandable to all alike, how could it be a "common salvation?" Our Savior clearly stated that salvation is based upon understanding, or knowing, if you please, and obeying his words (John 12:48).

4. We Can Know That We Are Saved. We are not proud or arrogant to state that we are saved from our past sins. The New Testament uses the term "know" 240 times. The Gospel according to John uses the designation "know" 70 times and in the brief epistle of I John "know" appears 41 times, asserting the blessed assurance in Christ Jesus. It seems clear the grand author of the Bible, God, wants us to understand and know his will. John, the apostle, said, *"these things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (I John 5:13). Yes, we can know that we are saved. We will not be judged by men's theories, feelings or ideas, but by the word of God (John 12:48).

Paul reminds the Romans of their former lives dominated by sin, *"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"* (Rom. 6:17-18). These Christians could be sure they were free from sin. How? As we today know by responding to the form of doctrine or teaching. Salvation is comprised of

a divine side and human side. The divine side includes all the things God has done to bring salvation to mankind: Christ (Rom. 5:8), grace (Eph. 2:8-9), blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7), engrafted word (Acts 11:14), hope (Rom. 8:24) faith (Rom. 5:1), confessing Christ (Rom. 10:10), the Gospel (Rom. 1:16), love of truth (I Thess. 2:10), and baptism (I Peter 3:21). The human side includes every human response mandated by God through his inspired word: hear (Rom. 10:17), believe (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24), repent (Acts 17:30), confessing Christ (Rom. 10:10), and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

Paul affirmed that when we are baptized we obey that "form of teaching" (Rom. 6:17). We can know that God is and that the Bible is His word. Furthermore, we can understand it. We can know what to do in order to be saved, and having obeyed His commands, we have an assurance of salvation. We are gratified to have these assurances, and full confidence may be placed in them. Paul writes *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (II Tim. 1:12).

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INTRODUCING BOB SPURLIN'S NEW VIDEO

Bob Spurlin, 60, the author of the previous article, has battled multiple sclerosis for the last ten and a half years. His bed-ridden existence continues with Bob's wife (Beverly) serving as the consummate caregiver. Two brothers share the bathing responsibility with other family members contributing to his care. Less than two years ago a nurse was employed to monitor the physical condition and perform other duties necessary for his care.

The brotherhood continues to rally to the Spurlin's cause in the purchase of his books (see titles below) and now a new video. The books were written with the aid of a computer translating his spoken words into written text. His thirty years experience as a Gospel preacher coupled with his personal experience in multiple tragedies has given him keen insight into many hardships of life. He is truly a Barnabas — a great

encourager. You will be blessed as you study with him from the Word of God.

The brotherhood has shown grace and compassion to this family in the past, and we pray that consideration for this new project will receive the same enthusiastic support.

NEW VIDEO RELEASED

Bob's illness has prohibited him from preaching for many years. But lately, two lessons have been video taped from his hospital bed. The lessons are: **"Coping with a Debilitating Disease"** and **"Coping with Alcohol and Drug Abuse."** Paul Sain, Bob's publisher, conducted an interview with him in the intimate setting of his home. The interview runs for thirty minutes and is included with the two sermons on the video. Those reading brother Spurlin's books have expressed an interest in meeting this valiant Christian soldier. This new video provides that opportunity.

- The video will bring concrete answers to some of life's greatest difficulties. Those faced with physical problems, illness, or emotional troubles will find strength and encouragement in these lessons.
- Giving the video to shut-ins, those suffering from illness, surgery, or crippling disease will help them discover strength when many want to give-up.
- Passing the video out to each family in the church/or in the community will give support in time of great need.

HOW TO GET THE VIDEO & BOOKS

The **videos (DVD or VHS) are \$10.00 each**, which includes shipping. Churches may buy a case of 30 for \$250.00, a \$50.00 discount (\$8.35 each). Profits from these materials go to the Bob Spurlin "medical fund" which aids the family in taking care of his medical expenses. His three books are still available also: **"Don't Ever Give Up" (2nd Edition) - \$10.00** **"Tackling Life's Troubles" - \$10.00** **"DIAL 911: Essentials to Living Life in the 21st Century - \$10.00**

Order from: Bob Spurlin, 2101 Glenwood Dr, Hartselle, AL 35640, Phone: (256) 773-0295, or E-mail: prechteach@aol.com

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lowers and His enemies about destruction, punishment and hell. If we want to imitate our Lord, and if we really love people's souls like He did, then we, too, will teach both the lost and the saved God's truth about future punishment of the ungodly. However, the horror of future unending punishment was not all that Jesus used to try to motivate people to live righteously. Hell was not the only topic on which Jesus preached. Hell and its future residents did not dominate every lesson He presented.

What else did Jesus use in order to motivate people to obey the God-head? In His "Sermon on the Mount," before Jesus spoke about hell, He told His disciples, *"Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven..."* (Matt. 5:12). A "reward in heaven" appeals to right-thinking people! The Bible calls that wonderful reward "life eternal" (Matt. 25:46) and "the crown of life" (James 1:12). It is *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"* (I Peter 1:4). Punishment motivates, but so does a reward.

In addition to using the possibility of future punishment and future reward, the Lord and His faithful preachers also appealed to their listeners to *serve the Lord out of love*. The "first commandment of all" of the old law was, *"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment"* (Mark 12:28,30). On the night of His betrayal, Jesus exhorted His apostles, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). He went on to tell them, "continue in my love" (John 15:9). To whom has the Lord promised the crown of life? Answer: *"...he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him"* (James 1:12). The Lord's love for us should compel us to love Him in return (II Cor. 5:14).

Is it okay to use the thought of eternal punishment to motivate people to serve the Lord? Jesus and His faithful servants of the first century certainly did so. As we have noticed, fear of punishment was not the only

means they used to motivate their listeners. Yet, it was, and is, a God-approved way of trying to get people to obey God.

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CHRIST, CHURCH AND SALVATION ARE INSEPARABLE

Roger Scully

Matthew 19:3-9 records Jesus being engaged by the Pharisees with questions pertaining to divorce and remarriage. Jesus, in answering these pitiable men applies a timeless principle of truth, *“what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”*—let not man *chorizo*, “separate.” While Jesus applied this principle to marriage, we must understand that it is also applicable to anything God has joined together. However, this principle is not always honored by men because they are continually trying to separate what God has joined.

James, by inspiration, declared that God has joined “faith” and “works”—*“faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”* (James 2:17). Yet, we find men continually teaching that man is saved by faith apart from works. In fact, the *Baptist Member Handbook*, under the heading of Salvation, states on page 20: “Salvation is given by God in grace, apart from human works ... it is received by man through faith.” Though God has joined faith and works, man has sought their separation.

Jesus, in explaining the rule of marriage said, “The two are one,” and can only be separated “for fornication” (Matt. 19:5,9). Despite this fact, man is continually removing husband and wife for any cause, thus, again, that which God has joined, man has sought to separate. And now, perhaps more than at any other time, man is attempting to separate Christ, salvation and the church, notwithstanding the fact that God has forever joined them together. Thus it has become necessary for us to prove, from Holy Writ, the inseparability of these three. We can accomplish this by showing: 1) the point at which a person receives salvation, and 2) the point at which one is added to the church. This is so because, as we will show, they merge at the same position.

At what point does a person

“receive” the hope of eternal life? The Bible is a book that must be learned, studied and applied properly, or else it becomes useless. That is not to say that the Bible is a useless book, but that it has become useless to him who does not use it properly. Consider a math teacher. Should he set aside the laws that govern math and conclude, falsely, that 2 plus 2 equals 5? Has not math become useless to him? Indeed, we must so concede. Math, in general, is not useless, but only to the teacher who has not applied the rules which govern math. And, such is the case with the Bible.

One rule that governs biblical interpretation is that of considering all the available facts, as revealed by God, on a particular subject. So, then, as pertaining to the subject of salvation, we must consider all that the Bible has revealed on the matter, and from this anthology of facts, draw only the conclusions that are warranted.

By collecting the revealed facts of salvation (under New Testament Law), we find there are a great number of things involved, none of which stand alone. This immense list can be narrowed, however, when viewed from the standpoint of that which man is required to do (acts of obedience; cf. Heb 5:8,9) in order to receive the hope of eternal life. We find that man must *hear* the word of God in order to develop faith (Rom. 10:17ff). We further understand it is required of man to *believe* that which has been revealed in God’s word, particularly that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 16:16). This faith, however, if left alone, is a dead faith which cannot save. Thus, faith must be made an active faith by man *repenting* or turning from his past sins (Acts 17:11). Yet, the facts do not stop here, for, as we continue to study God’s revelation, we read that man must associate himself with the Christ by *confessing* faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10). The Bible further reveals that man must be *bap-*

tized (immersed) in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). After all these things are done, the Bible says that the person who so complies has the hope of eternal life. Not only do we have these facts revealed, but we also have examples of this system being followed in the book of Acts.

In Acts 2:37 the question is asked, “what shall we do?” What shall they do for what? They were asking, in reality, what must be done to “call on the name of the Lord.” You see, Peter, in his historic sermon, quoted Joel in saying, *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (v.21). Thus the question asked is: “What shall we do to call on the name of the Lord to be saved?” This question came from them having *heard* the word of God, and having faith in “Jesus” (v.32). By asking the question, their confession is implied. They were answered, *“repent and be baptized”* (v.38). Verse 41 records, *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.”* Thus they “called on the name of the Lord” (cf. Acts 22:16, “arise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord”). If by calling on the name of the Lord one is saved (v.21), and one calls on His name by being baptized (v.41), then it must follow that this is the point at which a person receives the hope of eternal life (cf. Titus 1:2).

The Bible also reveals an institution known as “the church.” In fact, the Bible explains the church as being the *“manifold wisdom of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 3:10-11). Christ said, of Himself, that He would, on the foundation that He is the Son of God (cf. I Cor. 3:11), build His church (Matt. 16:18), which He explains as being synonymous with His Kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 1:13; Rev. 1:9). He then taught His disciples that the church/kingdom would come with power in their generation (Mark 9:1). Before ascending to the right hand of the Father, Jesus reminded His apos-

bles of this fact when He said, “ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come on you” (Acts 1:8). So it is, then, that in Acts 2 when the power came, the kingdom came, which must logically follow since the power was to accompany the kingdom, and since the church and the kingdom are synonymous terms, the church was established then and there. But, at what point was/is a person added to the church? Acts

2:47 states, “And the Lord added to the church day by day, those that were saved” (ASV).

Now, let’s draw some conclusions. We have shown: 1) the point at which a person is saved — water baptism; 2) the point at which a person is added to the church — upon their salvation. Thus, it can only be concluded that salvation and the church are inseparable for they merge at the same point, baptism (cf.

I Peter 3:21). And, further, since the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), having Christ as its head, wherein salvation is found (Eph. 5:23), then it must also be concluded that Christ and His church are inseparable. Thus we have shown, in brief, the inseparability of Christ, the church and salvation.

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THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

John Cotham

Christ not only came to shed His blood for our sins, but he also bled to purchase the church (kingdom). Paul reminded the elders at Ephesus just how much the church cost: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which **he hath purchased with his own blood**” (Acts 20:28). The church was a vital part of God’s plan for man’s salvation: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). Jesus “loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

Worldliness has been a problem for the church throughout the ages. Christ warned the church at Laodicea about their worldliness: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:15-17). Today, we have the same concern over worldly attitudes of many members of the Lord’s church. The scripture is clear about the role of the church in the world.

THE CHURCH MUST BE HOLY

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a

peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:9). Each member is to practice holiness: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Peter 1:15-16). As members of the church, we represent Christ and the Father. No wonder some misjudge the church because of our worldliness and hypocrisy.

ALLIANCES WITH THE WORLD ARE CONTRARY TO GOD’S WILL

“Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin” (Isa. 30:1). The Israelites sought counsel from their worldly neighbors. Sometimes, so do we. God’s grace teaches us “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). The world does not have answers to the questions that should be most important to mankind, such as: 1) Who is my maker; 2) Why am I here? And especially 3) Where am I going?

A worldly life is not in the best interest of mankind. We are told: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness” (II Cor. 6:14). The worldly will ridicule and persecute us for not being like them: “Wherein they think

it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you” (I Peter 4:4).

The world is full of lusts of every kind: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:16). It is so easy for Christians to fall prey to these enticements of Satan: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15).

OUR HOPE IS IN KEEPING OURSELVES UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). How do we do this? Paul said: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (II Cor. 6:17). Effectively, we are IN the world, but not OF the world. Those in the world may laugh at us, but we will have the last laugh: “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:12).

Stand firm, stand fast!

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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