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Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

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"If we refuse chance after chance, if God's appeal and challenge come again and again in vain the day comes, not when God has shut us out, but when we by deliberate choice have shut ourselves out from God" (William Barclay, **The Gospel of Luke**, 181).

"Unyielding prayer arises from an unyielding faith" (Paul Earnhart, **Glimpses of Eternity**, 103)

Question from Chile about Who May Take The Lord's Supper

Question

"How can we handle the issue of unconverted who think they are 'Christians' (or saved), and 'that they have fellowship with God' because they are members of any denomination (i.e., Pentecostal, Baptist, etc.), and when attending our worship services they want to take (or take) the Lord's Supper?" This brother went ahead to add, "Would we be committing a sin if we let that happen?"

Answer

Bobby L. Graham
Athens, Alabama, USA

Answer: The concern of this brother is widespread, because others also do not wish to drive off these interested persons so that no opportunity to teach them remains. We should be careful not to hurt

Why do you honor your parents

more than Me?

(Tanner Campbell)

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their feelings (Matthew 10:16). I say this, not because truth will not sometimes hurt feelings, but because it ought to be truth that does it, not our careless handling of the truth (Ephesians 4:15). When we teach what truth declares about the Lord's Table being in the kingdom (Luke 22:16) and in the local church (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), we do what we must do. On the other hand, when we become policemen who enforce this teaching on aliens by forbidding their participation, we do more than truth teaches or authorizes us to do. There is a difference between teaching truth, which God authorizes, and enforcing it, which He does not authorize.

The solution to this problem is spiritual education. The local church and individual members can accomplish good, even in this area, by simply teaching people what the New Testament teaches about the Lord's Supper, particularly its participants. Those redeemed by the death of Christ are the ones who can benefit in the Supper by remembering Christ their Passover (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 5:7). The needed teaching can take place in special lessons or in brief lessons at the Table. Whichever way is used to teach, those teaching should be sure to choose their words carefully, so they do not unnecessarily disparage the intentions or motives of the outsiders. It is easy to call such in questions when there is no need to do so. Simply teach what the Bible says.

When a non-Christian drinks the cup or eats the bread, he does not benefit spiritually as does the Christian, because he is unprepared by conversion and teaching to benefit. If enforcement is the answer, then why do we not also enforce similar restrictions on the singing, praying, contribution? There is no more authority for our becoming enforcers than there is for their partaking. Their position as aliens does not give them special exemption from sin, but it does suggest to strong Christians that they need our hand to guide and help, not the back of the hand.

Death of the American Family?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Forty years ago a secular news magazine reported, "Changes of a profound nature are under way in American family life.... This foment has convinced some social scientists that the 'death of the family' is at hand" (US News & World Report, April 16, 1973, p. 71). In 1980 18% of babies born in America were to unwed mothers, in 2010 it was 40.8% (cdc.gov). In 1967 the American divorce rate was 26%. Most states enacted no fault divorce laws, and the rate increased to about 50% in 1985, where it has remained (divorce.lovetoknow.com). It would be far higher but for the fact so many more unwed couples live together today (www.usatoday.com). Now 17 states allow same sex marriage, and the U.S. Supreme Court has invalidated the federal law defining marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman. Marriage is the first divine institution (Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:3-6). It is indeed between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:2) and is a life long relationship (Matthew 19:3-9; Romans 7:2-3). Man does not have the right to change it, alter it to suit himself or society, or leave it at will. As our society foolishly, blindly rushes toward moral destruction, Christians must be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16).

What Kind of Church Do You Want?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

In our lovely, little community we have a church dedicated to being brand new. We have another that exists for cowboys - and wanna be cowboys, and another for bikers. All the major brands of human tradition are represented - with their sectarian names identifying each tradition. We have the older models, imported from Europe, and the newer, made in America brands. Surely you ought to find one that pleases you. But doesn't that miss the whole point of being religious? Are we seeking to please ourselves or God? "For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). If the Son of God always pleased His Father and did His will rather than pleasing Himself and following His own desires (John 8:29), even though it meant going to the cross (Matthew 26:39,42,44), should we be seeking to please ourselves or our Father? Are you happy with your church? But is God? May I humbly suggest that you should look for a church that is determined to please God regardless of whether or not men are pleased? Shouldn't the question be What kind of church does God want?

Elders Planning Social Events for the Church

Ron Halbrook | Shepherdsville, Kentucky, USA

Keith,

Thanks for the good material.

I agree 100% that elders cannot organize and oversee social activities. It just occurred to me that on the one hand elders might avoid doing that while on the other hand admonishing and encouraging brethren to fulfill their duties of hospitality at all times. For instance, we meet in groups here for a few minutes after each Sunday P.M. service for the primary purpose of sharing more detailed information about those who are sick, or drifting, or visiting our services, etc. so that we can be more effective to follow up on these opportunities. In those sessions we are sometimes admonished about various duties involving both congregational activities and personal responsibilities, just as might be done in sermons or Bible classes. It would be stepping over the line whether in sermons, classes, or these visitation groups for the elders to say, "We have devised a plan for each family in this room to invite someone to your home once a month. We will monitor you to be sure you are doing so."

In Christian love,
Ron Halbrook

About Church Buildings

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Keith,

Keith, thanks for continuing to send out MOTT. Just an added thought

to the authority to have church buildings. We know that a place to meet is authorized in the command to meet.

But there is an interesting word in James 2:2. Many say if one comes into your "assembly." The ASV renders the passage as "For if there come into your 'synagogue' a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing...."

The Greek word actually is "*sunagoge*." I doubt the Jews rented their synagogue to the Christians to use on Sundays. The implication is that the Christians had their own meeting place set aside for their use. This would not be someone's living room, or someplace under a shade tree. The word signifies more than that.

Obviously, the scriptures tell us that Christians met in homes, by a river bank, etc. But James talks of some who had their own meeting places set aside for a special purpose.

Yours and His,
David

Question from Ethiopia about Baptism

Question

Dear brother Keith
Greetings,

I have a question please just respond as much as soon. How many baptisms do we have in both testaments?

Answer

There have been several baptisms in past ages. There was Moses' baptism "in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2), John's baptism (Mark 1:4), Jesus' baptism during His personal ministry in preparation for the kingdom (John 4:1-3), Jesus' baptism of suffering (Luke 12:50), and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:7-8). At the end of time the ignorant and disobedient shall be baptized with fire (Luke 3:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The "washings" demanded by the Law of Moses were baptisms. In Hebrews 9:10, the word "washings" is from the Greek term "baptismos," meaning "an act of dipping or immersion" (William D. Mounce, **Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words**. 1105). Some of these washings (baptisms) were of the entire body, such as that of the priests when they were inaugurated (Exodus 29:4), the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:4, 24), the priest defiled with any uncleanness (Leviticus 22:4-6), the priest who officiated at the burning of the red heifer (Numbers 19:1-7), the man who burned the red heifer (Numbers 19:8), a person cleansed by the water of purification (Numbers 19:17-19), the one who released the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:26), the man who burned the sin offering outside the camp on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:28), the person who ate the meat of an animal that died naturally (Leviticus 17:15), and those rendered unclean by whatever reason (Leviticus 15:8, 13, 16, 18, 22, 27). Some washings were of the hands and feet (Exodus 30:19-20; Deuteronomy 21:6). There were also washing of garments (Numbers 8:7; 19:7-8), of the inward parts of sacrificial animals (Exodus 19:7), of wooden vessels (Leviticus 15:12),

and of spoils of war that could not be cleansed by fire (Numbers 31:21-23).

But there is only one baptism authorized by the Lord in the New Testament at the present time (Ephesians 4:4-6). What are the characteristics which identify this one New Testament baptism?

One Authority: Jesus Christ

Who authorized this one baptism? Jesus Christ, who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, commanded baptism (Mark 16:16), and His chosen apostles, who were sent forth with the authority of Jesus behind them, repeated the command (Acts 2:38).

Since no other baptism has the authority of the Lord Jesus behind it, all baptisms other than the one New Testament baptism are spiritually worthless. Paul encountered twelve men at Ephesus who had received John's baptism. This baptism had several advantages: at one time it was commanded by God, it was in water, it was by immersion, and it was for the remission of sins. But John's baptism had noticeable disadvantages: it followed a confession of sins rather than of faith in Jesus and looked for a Christ yet to be offered. Thus the apostle baptized them "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 19:1-5). No denominational baptism is approved by God, for none is by the authority of Jesus Christ.

One Element: Water

What is the element of New Testament baptism? In other words, in what should one be baptized? When the Ethiopian eunuch desired to be baptized, he first asked Philip, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36) Then they "went down into the water," where Philip baptized the eunuch. Afterward "they came up out of the water" (Acts 8:38-39). After Cornelius' household had already received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48), the apostle Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized....?" (verse 47) Since this water baptism was "in the name of the Lord" (verse 48), it was New Testament baptism.

Despite these plain verses showing the one baptism to be water baptism, many religious people think the baptism of the Holy Spirit is for all believers today. Since there is only one New Testament baptism, we cannot have both Holy Spirit baptism and water baptism. If baptism in the Holy Spirit is still being sent from heaven, we must not practice water baptism. There is only one baptism today approved by the Lord.

Is the baptism with the Holy Spirit New Testament baptism? Holy Spirit baptism was a promise to be received (Acts 1:4-5); New Testament baptism is a command to be obeyed (Acts 2:38). Baptism with the Holy Spirit was given directly by the Lord (Matthew 3:11); the one baptism is to be administered by men (Matthew 28:19). Holy Spirit baptism is not the one New Testament baptism. Therefore, baptism with the Holy Spirit is not for us today.

One Action: a Burial

People often talk about the "modes" of baptism. By this they mean different ways to be baptized. The modes of baptism are usually listed as sprinkling, pouring, and immersion. The New Testament teaches

that in baptism there is “water” (Acts 10:47). In fact there is “much water” (John 3:23). It teaches that before one is baptized he must go “to” the water and then “into the water” (Acts 8:36, 38). The doctrine of Christ requires that the one being baptized be “buried.” (Romans 6:3-4) The Gospel further states that baptism includes being raised from the water (Colossians 2:12) and coming “up out of the water” (Acts 8:39). Can one honestly say that either sprinkling or pouring meet all these requirements?

One Subject: a Penitent Believer

Several denominations have the practice of sprinkling water on infants and calling it baptism. We have already demonstrated that sprinkling is not baptism. Are infants proper subjects of baptism? Who should be baptized? Jesus revealed that all believers are to be baptized (Mark 16:16). In the book of Acts we find the fulfillment of Jesus’ commission. Peter put both the reception of the word and repentance before baptism (Acts 2:38,41). The evangelist Philip baptized the Samaritans after they had believed (Acts 8:12-13). The Philippian jailor and his entire family believed before they were baptized (Acts 16:29-34). The inspired writer records, “many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). There is no authority for infant baptism in the New Testament. Thus, the proper subjects of baptism are people who have believed Jesus Christ is the Son of God, have repented of their sins, and have confessed their faith in Christ.

One Purpose: the Remission of Sins

Many denominations say that baptism is unnecessary; one can be saved without it. What does the New Testament teach?

In Mark 16:16 Jesus promised, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” The Lord divided people into two categories, the saved and the lost. Those who do not believe will be lost. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Christ made baptism as much a condition of salvation as He did belief. There are only two categories, not three. Jesus knew nothing of unbaptized, saved people. To be saved, one must have enough faith in Jesus Christ to obey Him in baptism. Where did Jesus place baptism, before or after salvation? Some denominations would have baptism without faith saving infants, who are not in need of salvation anyway. Others claim that faith without baptism will save. But the Lord’s plan includes both faith and baptism as conditions of salvation.

The inspired apostle Peter commanded, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Our Protestant neighbors tell us that Peter meant that baptism is “because of” the remission of sins. If this is so, repentance comes after the remission of sins also. The conjunction “and” joins “Repent” and “be baptized” just like a coupling pin joins two box cars of a train. Just like those box cars, as long as the coupling pin “and” is there, “Repent” and “be baptized” must be going in the same direction. Furthermore, the word “for” in Acts 2:38 is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 26:28, when he revealed, “... this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Did Jesus shed His blood unto the remission of sins? Then people need to be baptized unto the remission of sins.

Acts 22:16 recounts Ananias' command to Saul of Tarsus, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." According to the inspired record, the order is "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Denominational preachers exhort people, "Call on the name of the Lord, your sins will be washed away, when we have a baptizing you can be baptized if you desire, then you can arise." They have the order exactly backward.

According to Romans 6:3-4, Baptism brings the sinner into Christ, where he receives "every spiritual blessing" (Ephesians 1:3), including salvation (2 Timothy 2:10). It also brings the sinner into the death of Christ, where he receives the benefits of His blood, justification from sin (Romans 5:9-10). By going through a likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we demonstrate our faith that we are saved by His sacrifice for us. Thus we receive the benefits of His death in our behalf. Baptism stands between the sinner and being in Christ (verse 3), being in the death of Christ (verse 4), the new life in Christ (verse 5), being united with Christ (verse 5), being united with the Lord's crucifixion (verse 6), and freedom from sin (verse 7).

There is only one baptism today by Jesus' authority (Ephesians 4:5). That baptism has five characteristics whereby you can tell it apart from all others. It has one authority - Jesus Christ, one element - water, one action - a burial, one subject - a penitent believer, and one purpose - the remission of sins.

Question from Ethiopia about the Hebrew term "Elohim"

Question

Please clarify for me the term Elohim. what does it mean it is a proper name of God and plurality?

Answer

I am copying in below the definition of "Elohim" by Robert Jameison in his comments on Genesis 1:1 in the **Jameison, Faussett, and Brown** commentaries over the entire Bible.

the name of the Supreme Being, signifying in Hebrew, "Strong," "Mighty." It is expressive of omnipotent power; and by its use here in the plural form, is obscurely taught at the opening of the Bible, a doctrine clearly revealed in other parts of it, namely, that though God is one, there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead - Father, Son, and Spirit, who were engaged in the creative work

This plural nature of the one God is further implied in Genesis 1:26, where Moses records that God ("Elohim") said, "Let Us make man in our image, according to Our likeness." God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4), but this is united oneness. The Father and the Son are both God (Ephesians 4:6; John 5:18) and are one (perfectly united, John 10:30), but they are not the same divine person (John 14:28). The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:1-4), but He is not the same person as the Father (John 14:26; 15:26) or the Son (John 15:26; 16:7). They are three perfectly united divine spirits.

The term “elohim” is also used to designate pagan deities (Psalm 96:5), figuratively to designate human rulers, or judges, as they represent God and stand in His place (Psalm 82:1,6), and angels as His messengers. For example, in Psalm 8:5 the word translated “angels” is “elohim,” and the inspired writer of Hebrews confirms this is a reference to angels (Hebrews 2:7).

A Friendly Exchange on Matthew 24:34

Message to Me

Understanding of this passage hinges on the interpretation or definition of the term translated in the KJV as “generation” (Stong’s G1074 - Genea). James Strong’s translation of “Genea” is:

- “1. fathered, birth, nativity
- “2. that which has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family
 - a. the several ranks of natural descent, the successive members of a genealogy
 - b. metaph. a group of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character
 - i. esp. in a bad sense, a perverse nation
- “3. the whole multitude of men living at the same time
- “4. an age (i.e., the time ordinarily occupied by each successive generation), a space of 30 - 33 years

That being said, the Lord’s words in Matt 24:34 could indeed be referring to the generation currently living when His words were spoken (as in Definition #4) or it could also be taken to mean either:

- A. the people (or generation) alive when “these things (V4-33)” begin to occur (Definition #3,) or
- B. the Jewish people as a whole (Definition #2,) since He was speaking to His Jewish disciples.

Either A or B could be considered applicable in this instance. The Jewish people are still, despite multiple efforts to erase them, an identifiable “family” of humanity. My belief, however is that Jesus was intending the 3rd definition.

Given the context in which Our Lord is speaking in Matthew 24, specifically answering the questions “when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” posed by His disciples, it seems unlikely that he is referring to the generation alive when he is speaking. The disciples are asking when He will return to set up his kingdom. If His answer “before this generation passes away” is taken to mean the current living generation then The Lord’s Kingdom should have been made manifest somewhere around AD 120, and we should have witnessed “the end of the world” long before our current generation (us, the people of the mid-20th to early 21st century) arrived on the scene. Since it appears that we are not currently living, nor had our forefathers lived, in Christ’s Kingdom on Earth, and that the world has not yet ended it seems unlikely that He would have been referring to the people alive at the time He was speaking.

Yet it is plausible that He was referring to some future time and generation. Our generation has experienced more of what Christ

spoke about in Matt 24:4-33 than any previous generation. The Lord states in verses 24:21-22 "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." If we use the current generation living when Christ spoke definition then we would had to have seen a period in history between AD 33 and say AD 120 in which there were such tribulation that "there should no flesh be saved." No flesh saved ANYWHERE, at all. And we should not be here to be having this discussion, as the world should have ended. It's obvious that the world is still here.

History records some terrible wars and suffering during the period AD 33 to AD 120, but there was nothing so horrific that no flesh would be saved. Now, given nuclear proliferation, biological weapons, etc. I can see how something could occur in THIS generation (or subsequent generations) that would be so horrific, and so global in effect, that no flesh would be saved, without the return of King Jesus.

My pre-Millennial, pre-Tribulational opinion is that Christ was referring to the generation that would see the events of V4-33 begin. That generation would not pass until all those things be fulfilled. This would also work in concert with His "Behold, I come quickly (within the span of one generation)" statement which appears multiple times in His Revelation to John, and the many Old Testament and New Testament allusions to birth pangs, which start slowly but then increase in frequency, duration and intensity until the child, or in this case our Blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus is "birthed," so to speak, if one was to consider His return an allegorical re-birth.

Reply

I sincerely appreciate you corresponding with me and taking the time to defend your position on Matthew 24:34.

If the word "generation" is used, as you affirm, in the sense of "the whole multitude of men living at the same time," then I cannot see how "this generation" means anything other than men living at the time Jesus spoke. This is borne out by every usage of the phrase "this generation" in the book of Matthew (Matthew 11:16; 12:41-2; 23:36; and 24:34) or even of just the word "generation" (to the foregoing five verses, add Matthew 12:39, 45; 16:4; 17:17). The same phrase, "this generation," in the immediate context of Matthew chapter 24 is obviously a reference to the Jews living at the same time as Jesus (Matthew 23:34-36). And this passage sets the stage for the Lord's prophecies in chapter 24.

Matthew 23:34-36 makes it clear Christ is not discussing the destruction of the human race in Matthew 24:22 but of the Jewish nation of that generation. This is further clarified by the context following Matthew 23:34-36. Jesus declared that because of their rejection of the Son of God, their house (the Temple) was left "desolate" (i.e., "abandoned, empty - W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 308). God no longer dwelt in the Holy of holies; as of the generation that killed His Son, the kingdom was taken away from national Israel (Matthew 21:33-43).

In response, the disciples called the attention of the Master to the grandeur of the buildings that comprised the Temple complex (Matthew 24:1). In reply, the Lord prophesied that not one stone of the Temple would be left atop another (Matthew 24:2). Then the disciples asked three questions of the Lord. "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Verse 3)

Christ answered the first two questions in Matthew 24:4-34. All the signs of that passage were fulfilled in that generation, i.e., during the lifetime of Jews living at that time. Josephus, the Jewish commander taken prisoner by the Roman army commanded by Titus, recorded what he himself witnessed, the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation in A.D. 70 (well within your proposed time frame), including the stone by stone dismantling of the Temple to recover the gold that had run between the stones in the conflagration that gutted the Temple.

Jesus did not prophesy all flesh would be destroyed. He warned, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22). The "flesh" of which He spoke in this context were the Jews of that generation, the days were shortened, and some were saved.

Most certainly the kingdom of God has come. Both John and Jesus announced the kingdom was "at hand" during their ministries (Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:14-15). The Lord prophesied it would come while some in His audience were still alive (Mark 9:1). Paul and the Christians in Colosse to whom he wrote had been "conveyed ... into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). John and the disciples who composed the seven churches in Asia were in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9).

The establishment of the kingdom and the end of the world are not the same and do not occur simultaneously. In Matthew 24:35 - 25:46 Jesus spoke of His literal second coming and the end of the world (Matthew 24:35; 25:31). There are no signs when this will happen, and only the Father knows when it will be (Mark 13:31-33). Christ will not establish His kingdom then but will return the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:22-26). The material universe will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-12), and all mankind shall appear before Jesus Christ for judgment (John 5:28-29).

In seven emphatic statements at the beginning and end of Revelation Christ promised the saints in Asia He was coming quickly (Revelation 1:1,3; 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20). He meant what He said. He came in deliverance of the saints of that generation from their persecutors, in a parallel sense to which the Lord came in judgment on Egypt (Isaiah 19:1). Each came representatively to accomplish a judgment in time. When Christ comes again, He Himself will literally return, not to establish an earthly kingdom, but to meet His saints in the air, where we shall be with Him in heaven, not for seven years, but forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

The Jamaican Patois dialect is colorful, unique and humorous. It is my desire to share some of the philosophy shown in this mix of colorful phrases that are witty as well as thought-provoking. I hope the readers both profit and enjoy. In my quarter-century plus of teaching there, I have come to appreciate some things about their culture. – Jefferson David Tant

Patois: One one coconut full basket.

English: The basket can be filled even by adding just one thing at a time.

Meaning: One can achieve their goals if they are patient and determined.

A familiar adage in the English language (and perhaps other languages, as well) is “Rome wasn’t built in a day.” The operative word both in Patois and English is “patience.” It is also an often used word in Scripture. We find the word and its variations some 46 times in the Bible.

This is one of the characteristics of God, who has exercised great patience with his people time and again. Over and over he put up with Israel’s disobedience and stubbornness. We would certainly be without hope if the Lord was not patient with us in our own weaknesses. Please consider some of the various applications of the exhortation for us to be patient.

With life. “The end of a matter is better than its beginning; Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 7:8). Our world is conditioned to instant gratification. Even food is marketed as “instant coffee,” “Jiffy corn muffin” and “instant pudding.” This generation expects, as soon as they graduate, things their parents and grandparents worked many years for. But it is well known that we have a much greater appreciation for things we labor for rather than what is merely handed to us. “Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting” (Psalm 126:5).

With erring brethren. Do we sometimes get tired of brethren who are weak and stumble a lot? Of course we do! Should we give up on them? Obviously there comes a time to move on when it is apparent that they do not want to change, but “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

With teaching the lost. Obviously we would like for each prospect to be like the eunuch, who, after one lesson, said to Philip, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:37). Thankfully, I have had a few like that, but not many. Some may take years. We had a sister whose patience with an unbelieving husband eventually won him after 27 years. He even began preaching some. What is the value of a soul? What is the result if we give up too soon?

With ourselves. Did you ever undertake a difficult task, and after various obstacles and setbacks throw up your hands and say “I quit”? We’ve all probably been there. But there is one goal where quitting is not an option—heaven! “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the

coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains" (James 5:7). When the going gets tough, "we glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience" (Romans 5:3). Even in difficult times, we can look to the Lord for strength. "Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful" (James 5:10). "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Hebrews 10:36). Remember, "One one coconut full basket."

Romans the Eighth Chapter (No. 4)

This series of articles by the late Elmer Moore is reprinted from **Truth Magazine** by permission of the editor.

In Romans 8:4 Paul states, "that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He thus states the contrast that he will pursue. There are two directors; one is said to be the "flesh," the other the "Spirit." Three terms occur in this text that needs clarification. The terms "ordinance of the law," "after the flesh," and "after the Spirit."

"Ordinance Of The Law"

The **King James Version** reads "the righteousness of the law." A footnote in the **American Standard Version** suggests "requirements." The term occurs many times in the Roman letter and never loses its significance of being right, just, justified, or righteous. I am convinced that the writer is declaring that the righteous state, or justification, that one would have enjoyed had he kept the law perfectly (see Romans 3:27 - 4:4) is the condition of one who "walks after the Spirit." This truth is further affirmed in Romans 10:4 where Paul declares, "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone that believeth." The word "end" indicates the aim or "final issue or result of a state or process" (W. E. Vine, page 367). The end, or aim, of the law was righteousness. Thus, the "righteousness of faith" (Romans 10:6) was made possible by Christ when man receives the forgiveness of sins, and "walks after the Spirit."

Contrast: "After The Flesh" - "After The Spirit"

Paul presents a contrast and it is vital that one understands the contrast before his mind. To do this one must look closely at the immediate context. In a previous article it was suggested that "In all cases a writer or speaker is liable to suffer injustice, if his statements are interpreted without reference to the contrast before his mind." The contrast before Paul's mind is about allowing the desires of the flesh to direct one or allowing the Spirit's Law to direct him. There is no way that one can justify the idea that this is talking about the flesh of man as one of the directors and the spirit of that same man the other director. The flesh of man is simply a bundle of appetites that lead to sin only when the inner man plans and executes the means of gratification. The Baptist argument on apostasy asserts that the whole man, inner and outer, is depraved at birth. When regeneration occurs, they argue, the inward man is regenerated but the flesh, the outer, is not. They refuse to accept the fact that the inner man is responsible for the actions of the outer man. The inward man, involving the mind of man, must have a part in a man's actions for it to be either

good or bad. Paul is not talking about half a man on each side of this contrast, the flesh on one side and the spirit on the other. He is talking about **a whole man on either side**. Paul affirmed that the “Spirit’s law” produced life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). He then proceeds to describe the man who allows the fleshly desires to direct him and, in contrast, the man who allows the Spirit’s law to direct him. He describes a man who has to make a choice. He will either choose to gratify every desire of the flesh and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1), or he will choose to walk after the Spirit’s law. The Spirit’s law is the Gospel of Christ, (See article 2 of this series). Simply stated a man can choose to do what he wants to do or he can decide to do what God wants him to do.

More About Contrast

Paul has established a contrast; a man either walks after the flesh or (walks) after the Spirit. It is not necessary for him to use these complete terms in reference to the contrast after the contrast is established. For instance, Paul in Romans 3:23 - 4:25 contrasts one who is endeavoring to be justified by a “law of works” and one who is endeavoring to be justified by a “law of faith” (3:27). He does not use these terms to continue the contrast. In 3:28 he uses the term “faith” and is talking about the “law of faith” already introduced. He also uses the terms “believed” and “believeth” to refer to this law of faith. Likewise, he uses the terms “works” and “worketh” (4:2,4) to refer to the “law of works.” He is contrasting two systems. He illustrates this in citing the case of Abraham. **If** Abraham was justified by a “law of works” he would have cause to glory or boast, (3:27;4:2) and would merit his salvation; it would not be a matter of grace, but of debt, (4:4). In this precise manner Paul, in Romans Eight, sets the contrast by identifying two directors: one is the man who is determined to satisfy his fleshly desires, and one who is determined to satisfy God by walking after the Spirit. Paul uses the phrases “after the flesh,” “mind of the flesh” (**King James** states “carnally minded”) (4:6), and “in the flesh” (8:9) to identify man’s “walk after the flesh.” He uses the phrases “after the Spirit” (8:4,5), “mind of the Spirit” (**King James** states “spiritually minded”) (8:6), and “in the Spirit” (8:9) to identify man’s “walk after the Spirit.”

Baptism for the Dead

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The Mormons practice a baptism for the dead. The following quote, taken from the Latter Day Saints official website (lds.org), gives the reasoning behind the practice:

Because He is a loving God, the Lord does not damn those people who, through no fault of their own, never had the opportunity for baptism. He has therefore authorized baptisms to be performed by proxy for them. A living person, often a descendant who has become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is baptized in behalf of a deceased person. This work is done by Church members in temples throughout the world.

The New Testament does not agree with this doctrine. Jesus and His apostles commanded people to obey only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). He sent the apostles into all the world to convince men to obey

that baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). Those who believed the apostles were baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38-40). They did not teach or command any other baptism. If so, where is the verse that says so?

The Mormons claim Paul preached a baptism for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:29. The context shows he was trying to get people to see the folly of practicing Christianity if there is no resurrection, as some at that time were advocating (see Acts 23:8; Matthew 22:23). In response to the charge that the dead are not raised, Paul was showing the various errors of such a belief, including that of baptism. "What point is there to baptism," we might say, "which is essential to becoming a Christian (Galatians 3:27), if this life is all there is and the dead are not raised?" Another possibility is he referenced an erroneous practice of the day to show how even it was dependent on a belief in life beyond the grave.

If neither of these was his point, and Paul was actually teaching people to be baptized for the dead, as claimed, then he is to be ignored for preaching a different gospel. He himself warned, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Yet, he would have been guilty of that very thing if he departed from the baptism Jesus commanded (Mark 16:15-16), which Paul himself obeyed and encouraged others to obey at one time (Acts 19:5; 22:16). Who is willing to accuse Paul of such apostasy? I will not. I believe he remained consistent with the gospel of Christ in all that he taught and wrote, especially in what he said about a baptism for the dead. In that context, his point was, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

The great fallacy of this doctrine is that nothing in Christianity may be done by proxy. No one may believe for another or meet any other responsibility God commands. God holds each person responsible for his own choices (Romans 14:12). "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezekiel 18:20). Ironically, one the greatest arguments against acting by proxy to save people comes from the teachings of Joseph Smith, who wrote:

*For behold, **this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God**...Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that **I will repent** , that **I will return to my God** . Nay, ye cannot say this; for **that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life**, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world...For behold, **if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death**, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is **the final state of the wicked** (Alma 34:32, 34, 35).*

God's word agrees with this warning. The dead are eternally accountable for their choices in life: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2

Corinthians 5:10-11). Until that judgment, the dead must wait in Hades, the realm of the dead, where Jesus Himself went when He died on the cross (Acts 2:27, 31). In Hades, no one may change their condition from one side to the other because of the great gulf that is fixed between the two sides (Luke 16:26). Everyone must remain in their condition as they await the judgment. We had better be thankful that is the case because if we could do things in this life to move the dead from a lost condition to being saved, we could also do things to cause the saved there to be lost. If not, why not?

Alas, let God's word be true and every man a liar who gives false hope beyond the grave. The time to be saved from sin and prepare for judgment is today, in this life, and not the next. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). For, "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Why do you Honor your Sons more than Me?

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There is a biblical example that challenges many men and women to do that which they really don't want to do. It's about something that should be an essential part of every Christian, but many would much rather quickly forget this biblical example that hits too close to home for some Christians. What is this testing example? It is the account of Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, found in 1 Samuel 2:11-36. Eli held the office of high priest in Shiloh, his sons were priests under him. Hophni and Phinehas "*were corrupt; they did not know the LORD*" (v. 12), i.e. they were wicked because they did not regard or acknowledge God in honor and service. Instead they served themselves, as is evident from the text. They committed fornication with women who came to worship (v. 22). They had no regard for God's law for sacrifices, and the meat allotted to the priests (only breasts and thighs), instead, they scooped up whatever they could out of the pot (v. 14). "*Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD*" (v. 17).

Their father, Eli, had heard of the things committed by his sons (v. 22), and, although he was very old, he rebuked his sinful sons (v. 23-25), saying "Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD'S people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" I am pleased with the actions of Eli in this text. Many Christians who have become old and ailing will use this as an excuse to not crack down on the sins of their loved ones, hoping to keep peace in the family for the last few years that they'll live. Or some parents may pass sinfulness off by saying "My children are over 18 years of age, I cannot do anything anymore." That's deception! That's Satanic! It's an excuse for not doing what is right and necessary! Eli didn't do that. Instead, he compromised a good earthly relationship with his sons, to the intent that he might enjoy an eternal relationship with them. Unfortunately the good actions of Eli stop here, because, although he was in a position to do more, he quit; like many who have quit on their loved ones, giving up on them. They tell them once or twice that they don't agree with their lifestyle, only to no longer say

anything again. Allowing things to continue as they were, acting like nothing is wrong. To the lost, it seems that their lifestyle is accepted now. Beloved, just like Eli, every Christian is in a position to do something more than just a couple of attempts to reach their loved ones. Was the way Eli handled this (and the way some Christians handle this) pleasing to God? Was quitting on them justifiable in the eyes of God?

In this terrible situation that no one would like to be placed in, God speaks up. God addresses Eli in verses 27-36. God asked Eli a question: *“Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and **honor your sons more than Me**, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?”* The LORD knew that Eli could have done more. Eli knew he could have done more. Most every Christian knows they could do more to save the lost, especially their loved ones. What we all must do is make the due application. God has set the example before us. He has told us, just as He told Eli, that if we do not keep trying to save our loved ones, then we are honoring them more than honoring God. We are trying to preserve earthly relationships that last for only a few years, rather than trying to preserve a soul for eternity.

The consequence of Eli’s actions was God eliminating his entire family (v. 31-36). In verse 30, God told Eli “those who honor Me I will honor.” In examination of our lives today, are we honoring God in what we do? Are we placing importance on the important things? Remember the words of Paul in Romans 10:1, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” It was Paul’s heart’s desire and prayer to God for his kinfolk and loved ones to be saved. Is that our desire of heart? Or have we placed more desire on earthly relationships? Is that our prayer to God? I’ve yet to personally see a Christian pray for food without also laboring for it (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Likewise, can we pray for the salvation of our loved ones without giving them as many opportunities as possible to hear the truth (1 Samuel 12:23)? Christian, don’t give up on your loved ones. May we all set our minds to the task before us, and soon be able to truthfully say: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4).

Preaching That Converts

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As Paul traveled throughout his second missionary journey, he came to the city of Thessalonica. He followed his normal custom by attending the Jewish synagogue and using the scriptures to support his preaching of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:2-3). Due to his persuasive preaching, some believed and joined Paul’s group of preachers, while others did not believe (Acts 17:4-5). The unbelieving Jews grew angry and desired to get rid of the apostle. So Paul was forced to flee for the sake of his life. At a later occasion, because of such a rushed exit, Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica, reminding them of the circumstances by which they were introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:1-8). It is in this passage of Scripture that Paul describes the manner in which he came to them, preaching the doctrine of Christ, leading to the conversion of the Thessalonians.

Some things never change, especially in relation to the preaching of the gospel. Some will always have ulterior motives for preaching the gospel. Others will use flattering words to deceive their listeners. For these reasons, Paul affirms several characteristics about his preaching. The way and manner by which Paul preached was successful in penetrating the hearts of his hearers. He was unashamed of the manner in which he preached. Thus, if we want to have the kind of preaching that will lead lost souls to the saving gospel, then our preaching must be like Paul's!

Bold Preaching

The way in which Paul introduced the gospel unto the brethren at Thessalonica was in a bold manner (1 Thessalonians 2:2). Strong's defines the word bold as "to be frank in utterance, or confident in spirit and demeanor." Bold preaching does not seek to disguise itself, but it lays everything out in the open, easily understood. Boldness is a quality that does not seek to hide sin, but exposes it. Bold preaching will not excuse the ignorance of false teachers, but openly show their falsehoods.

Many people are ashamed of bold preaching. Many are only fearful that bold preaching will run people away from the church. Thus, they will accuse preachers of being mean and demeaning towards others in their preaching. Accusations may include being unkind and unloving towards others. The sad reality is that anyone ashamed of bold preaching is ashamed of powerful, effective preaching. They are ashamed of the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).

Consider the preaching of several ministers of the gospel: Isaiah was bold in his preaching (Romans 10:20, 21), as were Stephen (Acts 7:51) and Paul (Acts 14:2-7). Do we pray for boldness? The apostles considered the need to beseech the Lord in prayer for boldness in their preaching (Acts 4:29-31). A spirit of boldness is not about being self-reliant and belligerent, but about relying upon God.

We should never grow ashamed of the truth contained in God's word. We must continue to be bold and distinctive in our preaching. Those distinctions will be easily seen as we preach the truth of the one church (Ephesians 4:4), the necessity of water baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and the error of instrumental music (Ephesians 5:19).

Bold preaching will expose sin, command repentance, hold the standard of holy and righteous living, and warn of God's judgment for sin. Any type of preaching that is not characterized by boldness is not biblical preaching! Preaching that is full of cowardice will certainly not convert anyone to a confident trust in the God of heaven.

Honest Preaching

Perhaps the most difficult thing for Christians to realize is that some do not preach the gospel out of sincerity. Some have evil motives for preaching, thus it leads to a kind of preaching that is contrary to the gospel itself. Their preaching is full of lies, it is not honest preaching. Paul affirms that his preaching was full of honesty and integrity (1 Thessalonians 2:3-6).

His preaching was not of "uncleanness" or "guile." He did not try to

“please men” nor did he use “flattering words.” Paul’s preaching was never intended to deceive his audience. Honest preaching will never seek to deceive or manipulate the hearers of God’s word. If there is anything that would distract listeners from receiving the honest truth of the gospel, then it must be removed.

Hypocrisy in the life and words of a teacher will cause people to believe they are being deceived. James warned about hypocrisy in our teaching. How can a man teach one thing and yet practice another? It makes him a hypocrite and he will be judged for the lie which he lives (James 3:1, 10-12). If our intent in preaching is about gaining respect, admiration, and appreciation from our listeners, then we must be careful (cf. Luke 6:26).

One reason many teachers fill their preaching with empty promises, shallow explanations, and deceptions is because people do not want the honesty contained in God’s word. They would rather believe in a lie (2 Timothy 4:2-4). They love unrighteousness and God allows them to believe a lie unto their own destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

No matter how unpopular honest preaching may become, we must be ready to present the word of God in a manner that is faithful to the message. God is a witness in our preaching (1 Thessalonians 2:5). He will judge us in accordance to how we handled His words. The word of God is what will give unbelievers faith (cf. Romans 10:17), not the lies conceived in the minds of men.

Affectionate Preaching

Paul described his preaching as a mother who gave everything of herself in order to nurse her children (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8). His preaching was characterized by affection, concern, love, and adoration for those to whom he spoke to. Affection needs to be directed towards the souls of mankind and we must treat them with the same sort of concern that Paul had for them.

We must learn to join love and truth together (Ephesians 4:15). Preaching without love will only cause harm and destruction to a church. An abrasive attitude can turn people away from the Lord. Many are guided by the delusion that we can have a mean-spirited attitude in preaching the truth and be justified by that spirit. Do we believe that if we make a stand for the truth with no regard for love, perhaps causing some to run away from the church, that the Lord is pleased with us? We are sadly mistaken.

Affection should not be mistaken for tolerance, though. Love demands discipline. Just as a father who loves his child must correct his child when the child does wrong, love will not excuse sin, nor does it ignore rebellion (cf. Hebrews 12:6-7).

Affection and love must be attributes of effective preachers.

Conclusion

Too many preachers are concerned with only preaching in a way to gain favor with their listeners. They turn to means and methods that are contrary to the gospel of Christ. The social gospel is advanced, while those who preach “health and wealth” are praised for their

encouraging messages. This only leads to developing weak-minded people that have no genuine interest in spiritual matters. Sin is never condemned, nor is repentance expected. This is weak and insipid preaching and breeds weak Christians and weak churches.

Let us all work to have an effective kind of preaching. Preaching that is effective in presenting God's word, edifying the body of Christ, and converting lost souls. This is the kind of preaching characterized by the apostle Paul. We can easily demonstrate this kind of preaching in our sermons, too.

Guarding Our Influence : Isaac & Rebekah

Genesis 24:63-28:9

from the e-book, "...And They Shall Become One Flesh..."

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So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob (Genesis 25:27-28).

Dealing With Changes

"Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?" This was Rebekah's question for Abraham's servant (Genesis 24:65) as they came near the end of their journey. It was Isaac, soon to be her husband. The marital relationship is full of changes, the least of which for Isaac and Rebekah included the fact that they'd not met before the time of their marriage (Genesis 24:66-67).

Rebekah, like her deceased mother-in-law, was barren. Therefore, "Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife... and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. (Genesis 25:21)

More changes were on the horizon, as children would be added to their family. Later, due to a famine in the land, Isaac and Rebekah moved to Gerar. This would bring with it new challenges and circumstances. Then, eventually, they would be faced with the time for their children to leave home. The one constant in life is change.

Breaking The Cycle

When Isaac and Rebekah went to Gerar, the men of that place asked about Rebekah. Isaac said, "She is my sister" (Genesis 26:7). Abimelech saw Isaac showing endearment to Rebekah (Genesis 26:8-9), and rebuked him for deceiving them. Years before, his father had done the same thing when the land of Canaan was in a famine. Abraham came to Abimelech (presumably the father of the man in Isaac's generation), king of Gerar, and claimed that Sarah was his sister (Genesis 20:2).

Children often repeat what they see in their parents. Isaac, faced with the same situation as Abraham, did the exact same thing that Abraham did. Good examples invite imitation; bad examples tempt and enslave when followed. The cycle needs to be broken.

Favoritism And Its Fruit

Who is your favorite child? It is a question that invites trouble;

especially if it is indulged with an answer. Every child is different, having their own unique personality. Parents are duty-bound to cherish and encourage **all** their children equally. Not necessarily in the same way (different personalities may require different approaches), but **all** children are to be loved equally. To do otherwise is to cause problems in your family now, and invite problems even through future generations.

We're told that Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob. These preferences would lead to a myriad of troubles between the brothers and their parents. Esau took wives for himself that displeased his parents (Genesis 26:34-35). Rebekah conspired with Jacob to steal Esau's blessing from Isaac (Genesis 27:5-17), which led Esau to despise his brother, even unto death (Genesis 27:41-45). Esau, seeing that his parents were pleased with Jacob, for he was not going to take a wife from the Canaanites, attempted to redeem himself in their eyes by marrying a daughter of Ishmael (Genesis 28:6-9). We see a family in turmoil, part of which was caused by favoritism. Eventually, we see that Jacob would repeat the same with his own children, favoring Joseph above the rest, bringing much tension and trouble to his home also.

Example Of Diligence

During Isaac's days in Gerar and the surrounding regions, he was a busy man, working to care for his family, servants, flocks and herds. We are told that the Philistines had stopped up the wells that Abraham had dug years before, and so Isaac busied himself reopening the wells of his father (Genesis 26:18). In addition, he initiated the digging of other wells in the region (Genesis 26:19, 21-22, 32).

It is important that fathers and mothers lead exemplary lives for their children to imitate. Isaac showed himself to be a hard worker. As important as demonstrating good work ethic is, it is likewise important that parents demonstrate their love for God and His will before their children (Ephesians 6:1-4; Titus 2:3-5).

Wise Solomon wrote:

My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you (Proverbs 6:20-22).

The Church of the New Testament (Sketch)

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Origin

The church of the New Testament differs a great deal from the church of the Old Testament. The Church of the Old Testament was called the church in the "wilderness" Acts 7:38. It was a national church. It had its beginning from Mount Sinai, and it is sometimes referred to as Judaism. But the church of the New Testament has identifying features from the scriptures.

It has a divine origin. There is not an institution without a beginning. The prophets of old foretold this church (Isaiah 2:2-4; Michah 4:1-2; Daniel 2:31-45). God purposed it before the foundation of the world

(Galatians 1:15-16; Acts 26:22-23; Ephesians 3:1,10-11). John the Baptist and Jesus Christ spent their time here on Earth preparing its establishment (Matthew 3:1-3; 11:17). Also Christ promised to build it (Matthew 16:18), and finally this church had its establishment on the Pentecost day following the resurrection of Christ in the year 33 AD.

Name

The church of the New Testament has a name. It is being called by many designations such as kingdom of Christ (John 18:36), body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), house of God (1 Timothy 3:15), temple of God (Ephesians 2:21-22), church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2, Acts 20:28), and church of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16). What belongs to God belongs to Christ (John 17:10).

Worship

The worship of the New Testament Church must be according to New Testament Scriptures. Items of worship are teaching and preaching (Acts 2:42-47), the Lord Supper (Acts 20:7; Luke 22:17, singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), collection (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and prayers (Acts 12:5; 20:36).

Organization

The church of the New Testament is organized locally (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Officers of the church locally are elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13) and universally evangelists (Ephesians 4:11). The elders feed the local church with God's word (Acts 20:28) and oversee the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3). The deacons serve the church, assisting the elders (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Evangelists preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

Mission of the Church

This has to do with the work of the church.

Evangelism (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 4:2; 2:2; Romans 10:14-15. The church is a sending agency (Acts 13:1-3; Philippians 1:5; 4:15-18).

Edification: to build up. The church should have a teaching program (Ephesians 4:15-16). And they are to edify the body through worship (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 10:25), teaching God's word (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:1-5), proper discipline (Titus 3:10; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians. 3:6, 14, 15; Romans 16:17, 18), and proper love and regard for one another (Ephesians 4:29-32; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33).

Benevolence: The church takes care of its needy members not unbelievers (Acts 6:1-3). These needy members are qualified (1 Timothy 5:9-10, 16). In times of emergency, local churches contributed to needy members of other local churches (Acts. 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-27).

Entrance into the church

Entrance is upon hearing the gospel (Acts 8:12), believing the gospel (Acts 8:12-13; Mark 16:15-16), repenting from sins (Acts 2:38; 11:18), confessing faith in Christ (Acts 22:10; 8:37), and being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:41; 8:38; 10:48). When anyone does all of the above five items, he is known as one who has been called out of the world by the

gospel of Christ into one body or church or kingdom (Colossians 1:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

How the Kingdom Grows

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Three parables of the Master reveal how the kingdom of God grows. The kingdom of God does not grow the way the rule of men does. The Roman Empire of Jesus' day and the United States of America today each grew into the mightiest nation on earth through a long series of mostly successful wars and conflicts. Not so the reign of heaven.

Like Seed Growing

Mark 4:26-29

My younger grandson planted sunflower seeds and waited impatiently for them to germinate and grow into plants. By the time the stalks were twice his height, he lost interest. But he learned that the power to produce life is in the seed. Neither my six year old grandson nor a Ph.D. botanist understands how life got into that seed. It is the work of God.

The power to change the self-willed sinner to a submissive child of God, that is to produce the kingdom of God within the human heart, does not lie with the eloquence of the preacher (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), clever methods that beguile the sinner into obedience (2 Corinthians 4:2), or carnal attractions that lure impenitent sinners into the fold (John 6:26-27). The power is in the word of God (Romans 1:16; 10:17), which, when faithfully preached and taught, will always accomplish the will of the Lord (Isaiah 55:10-11). **It doesn't matter who plants the seed but Who put the life in the seed** (1 Corinthians 3:6).

If my grandson becomes a gardener, he will learn to garden in faith. He will plant the seed and then go about his business, trusting that the seed will germinate, grow into a plant, and produce a crop. **We sow the seed of the kingdom into human hearts in faith that the word will do its work**. We preach and teach, then we leave the sinner and go about other tasks, trusting the seed to germinate within the heart, grow into faith, and produce the rule of Christ in the heart. The one who says any method whereby the word is imparted to hearers does no good lacks faith in the Lord and in His word. The word of God is still "living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12).

The farmer must be patient (James 5:7) as he waits for the sunshine and rain to bring the crop to maturity. We must simply sow the seed and wait patiently for the Lord to yield the increase. There are times of faith testing frustration when all our labor seems to be accomplishing nothing. We must not lose heart.

"Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy" (Psalm 126:5).

Like Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

Though the mustard seed was not strictly the smallest seed known in Palestine, it was so tiny that its minuscule size was proverbial (Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6). Yet it became such a large shrub, one the size of a small tree and in which birds nested, growing to a height of

ten or twelve feet, that it was planted in the open field rather than the garden.

The prophets foretold the universal (Daniel 2:35), eternal (Daniel 2:44) extent of the kingdom of God, and this is indeed the nature of the heavenly reign (Hebrews 12:22-23; Revelation 12:5). But its beginning was so unimpressive that the disciples were to have their faith severely tested. The King began His life in a stable and ended His career on a cross. His twelve emissaries were “uneducated and untrained men” (Acts 4:13). The disciples were a despised, severely persecuted minority (Acts 8:1-3). But in one generation the gospel and with it the kingdom of God was carried throughout the world (Colossians 1:3-8) and proclaimed to “every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:21-23).

When the foundation of the rebuilt temple was laid by Zerubbabel, the prophet Zechariah inquired, “For who has despised the day of small things?” (Zechariah 4:10) Many of the old men who had seen the temple that Solomon had built wept loudly (Ezra 3:12). In comparison to that temple the one being built seemed to them as nothing (Haggai 2:3). But the Lord through the prophet declared, “The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former” (Haggai 2:9).

In 1948 one Nigerian man, C.A.O. Essien, took a Bible correspondence course sent by the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee. Today there are multiplied thousands of Christians in Nigeria. The mustard seed has grown into a tree.

Like Leaven

Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

The woman and the amount of flour in this briefest of parables are the details that make it a story and have no spiritual significance. It is the leaven that represents the kingdom of heaven.

The work of leaven is ... inward and invisible. This parable is a powerful declaration of the spiritual nature of the kingdom....

The leaven must therefore symbolize the gospel as it works unseen in the individual spirit (1 Pet 1:22-23) and then moves quietly from one heart to another (Earnhart. 61).

The Word of Christ, quietly and unseen, permeates the human heart until “all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17), and the son of the kingdom is transformed into the very image of the Son of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). Only when our minds are transformed will we present our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). Like yeast inside dough, the change must take place within. Reworking society from impoverished to wealthy, from autocracy to democracy, will not change people or save their souls. Wicked, lost sinners are the primary populace of Hollywood, whereas thousands of righteous Christians call Zimbabwe home. Only the gospel quietly working inside the heart will change the son of the wicked one to a child of God.

Without the marching of armies or the booming of artillery the kingdom of heaven spreads throughout society until every honest heart is “brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Work Cited

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