

# November 2017

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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren  
**WHATEVER THINGS** are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely  
are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

PHILIPPIANS  
4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christistheway.com](http://christistheway.com).

## Question on harmonizing Luke 24:49-51 and Acts 1:1-9

William J. Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

### Question:

I was asked a question I have not given thought of since I began to read and study the bible. About the account of Luke 24 vs 49-51 and Acts 1 vs 1-9.

If Jesus was forty days on earth before taken to heaven then how do we harmonise the two accounts. Thanks.

Chizuru Lowell Odoemelum

### Answer:

Thank you for your question. I'd be delighted to demonstrate how Luke 24:49-51 and Acts 1:1-9 harmonize.

Perhaps the first thing we should do is acknowledge these two books are written by the same author. Luke 1:3 addresses the gospel account to the "most excellent Theophilus." Acts begins with a reference to "the former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up..." (Acts 1:1-2). They are essentially volume 1 and volume 2 from the pen of Luke about the Messiah (Luke) and His church (Acts).

One could very easily read Luke 24 and assume that everything recorded there took place on a single day. There are no date stamps, no indicators of the passage of time. However, Acts 1:3 states that Jesus was seen by the apostles during the forty days after His resurrection. As such, the content of Luke 24 cannot all happen on a single day, for the ascension (Luke 24:51) took place forty days after the resurrection.

Everything recorded in Luke 24:1-43 took place on the day Jesus was risen from the dead. It is also possible that verse 44 took place that evening when Jesus was assembled with the apostles in the upper room. In light of Acts 1, Luke 24:45 is likely a summary statement. It is doubtful that in one evening "He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures." He did this through the forty days when He was "...speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

There is no way to know at what point during the forty days Jesus made the declaration of Luke 24:46-48. It is entirely possible this was repeated to them more than once. The promise of the Father mentioned in Luke 24:49, and the command to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they received the Spirit accords with Acts 1:4-5.

In Luke 24:50, "He led them out as far as Bethany...", which was about 2 miles outside Jerusalem (John 11:18). This would be the final gathering of the apostles with the Lord. Acts 1 speaks of it in verse 6. In the gospel account, the Lord lifted his hands, blessed them, and was then carried up into heaven (Luke 24:50b-51). The book of Acts records a short conversation (Acts 1:6-8) before His ascension. Verse 8 indicates their work would begin in Jerusalem and eventually spread to the end of the earth (all nations), just as He had told them in Luke 24:47.

Of His ascension, Luke 24 simply says "...He was parted from them and carried up into heaven." Acts 1 also tells us that a pair of angels appeared to the apostles, and spoke of Jesus coming in the same manner they saw Him depart (Acts 1:10-11). The Lord having departed, Luke 24:52 says they "returned to Jerusalem." Acts 1:12 says the same.

The two accounts are parallel. There are times when one will give details the other does not, but there is no point where the two are at odds with one another. They are consistent; they are in harmony.

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## **Possessing the Priceless**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Some people find the blessings of the kingdom of Christ though they are not even looking (Matthew 13:44). Others find Christ as the result of diligent search (Matthew 13:45-46). Regardless, the one who discovers the riches in Christ must be willing to joyfully give up anything in life to obtain this surpassing wealth (Matthew 13:44,46). The blessings of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven are greater than all the world's wealth (Matthew 6:19-21), pleasures (Ecclesiastes 2:1-2), popularity (Romans 8:31), or even our family ties (Matthew 10:34-37). We will have made the shrewdest of all transactions if we sacrifice all the world has to offer for the kingdom of Christ (Matthew 16:24-27). "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." So much the more so when that which he cannot lose is of preeminent value.

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## **The Importance of Prayer**

H.F. Sharp, Sr. | from **The Preceptor**, April, 1985

In writing on the subject of the importance of prayer, let us first observe that prayer is the avenue by which we make known to God our petitions and our thanks. The Christian's request, of course, stems from a heart that is filled with adoration and love of God: requesting the things that he needs, thanking God for the things that He has already given him, recognizing how little and insignificant we are in the sight of God.

Prayer is important first of all because God commanded it. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 we are told to pray

without ceasing. Prayer is a very important thing because as the result of it our sins are forgiven. In 1 John 1:9 we read "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

In prayer we show our adoration of God. In the Old Testament when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had become so powerful and so high and mighty in his opinion of himself, he said in Daniel 4:30 that he had gained this great kingdom by his own power and might. After God caused him to go out into the field and eat grass like an ox and his body was made wet with the dew of heaven, he was made to recognize how powerful God is, and he honored and praised him. In Daniel 4:34-37 he said:

*I lifted up mine eyes to heaven and mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

In our prayers to God we should recognize the greatness of God and adore him also. We are told by the apostle Paul as he writes to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:16 that he dwells in light that no man can approach. It would be wonderful if each of us could recognize how small we are, how inadequate we are to supply our needs. What frail creatures we are. We cannot approach this One who dwells in light unapproachable without mediation by Christ. It is impossible for me to pray to God without recognizing the name of Christ and to pray to him acceptably and in harmony with his will. How little I am as a creature upon His earth as the God of heaven looks down upon the creatures of the earth. Prayer is important because it should make us recognize how small and insignificant we are and how much we need Him. In calling on him in prayer we are made to recognize how great He is; how noble and how high! Certainly sometimes we seem unaware of these things and fail to think about them, but a sincere and honest prayer to God, when we are pouring out the petitions of our heart to Him, makes us recognize how much we need him and what little ability we have to help ourselves. Prayer, then, is certainly important in that we can adore God.

We also recognize the importance of prayer in showing our appreciation to God for the things he has given us. How many times have we thought to thank God for the very air that we breathe or the water we drink, for the food that we eat, the clothing we wear and especially for the thousands of brethren in Christ of like precious faith who encourage and help us on the road to heaven? I remember that on one occasion as Christ was passing through a town there were ten lepers who cried out asking Jesus to heal them (Luke 17:11-19). Christ heard their plea and answered their cry. He told them to go and show themselves to the priest. As they started they were healed. One leper out of the ten turned back to give thanks to God. He showed his gratitude. How ungrateful people are in this day and age. I think on many occasions how ungrateful I am and forget on many occasions to thank God for what he has done for me. I fail to thank him for the kind of parents I had, for the kind of grandparents I had, for my boys who are preaching the gospel of Christ, for a wife who has encouraged me throughout all the days of my life as a preacher. I sometimes fail to thank Him for all the things he has done. Sometimes we become ingrates. The most despicable thing we can think about is man's ingratitude - to be an ingrate. In prayer to God I can show him how truly grateful I am to him. The apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:6-7:

*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Through prayer our needs are supplied. We are told by that grand old apostle Paul that God will supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19). How wonderful it is to know that I can cease to worry about the things of this old world because God will supply those needs. He may not supply for me a million dollars, but He will supply the needs that I have. He will assist me in all the ways that I go. In the very shadow of the cross, Christ prayed in the garden of Gethsemane: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:

nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:39) God supplied that need. He answered that prayer. He sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him (Luke 22:43). All the need that Christ had at that time was supplied, but the cup did not pass away. God heard and answered his prayer.

In prayer, we show the faith we have in God who loved us and gave his Son to die for us. In Luke 18:1- 8 Christ spoke

*a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man: yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

In this parable we are shown that we should be persistent in our prayers to God: praying for the things that we need, for the things that will cause the spread of Christianity, for the things that will cause others to hear the word of God and be brought to Christ. If in our prayers we make our request not one time but over and over, God will hear. As this unjust judge did for the woman what she asked, not because he feared God nor worried about man, but because of her persistence in making her request. How persistent we should be in our prayer to God. He concludes this particular parable by saying, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” This is an outstanding question. When asking whether there will be faith on the earth, is he asking whether there will be faith in God when Christ comes? I hardly think that is what he has reference to. It seems to me there will always be men who have enough judgment, enough common sense, to recognize that there is a Creator and a heavenly being. I can't look at the world and this vast universe as it works in harmony with the laws that God set in order - and so completely perfect it is that all our watches are set by God's great chronometer the sun above - and but believe that there will always be some who believe there is a God. He is not talking about whether there will be faith that there is a God when Christ comes or whether there will be faith that the Bible is the word of God. Brother C.R. Nichol once said, “I can take the 2nd chapter of the book of Daniel and prove to any infidel or modernist, whose mind is free and open, that the Bible is the word of God. No man can consider the statements made in Daniel 2 about the four great world-wide kingdoms that were to come as, of course, Nebuchadnezzar was the first ruler of those great kingdoms and then the Medo-Persian kingdom, the Grecian kingdom and finally the Roman kingdom. As Daniel told king Nebuchadnezzar what his dream was and told him what was going to come to pass, no man can read the statements made by Daniel and fail to recognize that these events were being foretold by God to Daniel. Thus, when Christ asked, “When the Son of man cometh will he find faith on the earth?”, he did not inquire about faith that there is a God or that the Bible is the word of God, but whether or not he will find men on the earth who have faith in the prayers they pray. My friend, how much faith do you actually have today in the prayer you pray to God? Do you truly believe that he will hear? Do you believe that he will answer your prayer? When the Son of man comes will there be people on the earth who have faith in the prayers they pray to God. That God hears and God answers.

Brother Homer Hailey once remarked that prayer is the most neglected source of help the Christian has, and I believe that statement to be true. It is the greatest source of help that you and I will ever have in this life. When troubled minds come, our loved ones are gone, problems arise in the church, enmity arises between brethren, friends forsake us, how wonderful it is to take these things to the Lord in prayer. He knows, He hears, He understands and He answers. Will the time come when there is no faith in the prayers we pray?

James said “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16b). The importance is that we can show our faith to God and our faith in God and faith in his word by doing

what he says. Prayer is a very important thing. When mothers and fathers allow their children to go forth in the world without ever having seen them utter a prayer to God in their home, that boy and girl go out with two strikes against them. Pray in your homes. Pray with your children. Let your lives be prayerful lives, and God will hear, and God will bless.

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## Answering the Sabbath Observance (1)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Those who claim that the Sabbath (Saturday) is the day God has ordained from the beginning certainly believe that their claims are based on Scripture, and vigorously defend their belief and practice. But a careful examination of the Scriptures shows a problem with the arguments they make to support the practice of keeping the Sabbath as a holy day in the New Testament era. Let us consider the arguments that are made to support the claim, and then see what the Bible has to say.

### Proposed Reasons for Observing the Sabbath

(1) The Sabbath is a holy day, for God blessed it and set it aside. “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it...” (Genesis 2:3). “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

Response: The truth is that God also set aside other days as “holy.” “On exactly the **tenth day** of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a **holy convocation** for you” (Leviticus 2:27). It is obvious that the “tenth day” of the month is not a Sabbath. The fact is that there are various things in the Old Testament that were holy, but which were confined to the Old Testament period and were not included in New Testament practices.

*“These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim **as holy convocations**, to present offerings by fire to the LORD--burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each day’s matter on its own day” (Leviticus 23:37).*

We would agree that burnt offerings are not a part of the New Covenant, even though God said they were “holy.”

(2) The Sabbath was to be perpetual, everlasting, forever, etc.

*“So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed” (Exodus 31:16-17).*

Response: Notice that the passage says the Sabbath was to be perpetual “**throughout their generations.**” When the nation of Israel ceased to exist, “their generations” also ceased to exist. There were also other “forever” and “perpetual” matters that obviously are not to be observed today. For example, when God brought Israel out of Egypt, the Passover feast was inaugurated, as the Lord “passed over” the houses with blood on the doorpost. “Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; **throughout your generations** you are to celebrate it as a **permanent** ordinance” (Exodus 12:14). I am not aware that Sabbath observers observe the Passover feast today.

The fact that something was “permanent” is modified by “throughout your generations.” We further note that there were other observances that were “perpetual,” “continual” and “throughout your generations.” “When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. There shall be perpetual incense before the LORD **throughout your generations**” (Exodus 30:8). “It shall be a continual burnt offering **throughout your generations** at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD...” (Exodus 29:42).

*“Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year; he shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year **throughout your generations.**”*

*It is most holy to the LORD” (Exodus 30:10).*

In these passages, we note that the Passover, the burning of incense, and the offering of atonement carry the same language of perpetuity that the Sabbath does, yet it is understood that they are not considered a part of God’s arrangement with us today.

(3) Jesus kept the Sabbath.

Response: Certainly Jesus kept the Sabbath. He lived under the Law Moses. “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, **born under the Law**” (Galatians 4:4). As an observant Jew, Jesus was circumcised (Luke 2:21.) He kept the Passover (Luke 22:15). We would certainly expect him to observe the Law, for that was the Law under which he was born, lived, and died. If he did not do so, he would have sinned, and thus would not be eligible to be the perfect sacrifice when he died for us.

But there is no mention of his observing the Sabbath after his resurrection, even though he remained on the earth for some 40 days. That would include at least five Sabbath days.

The reason we find no further observance of the Sabbath is seen in the fact that the Sabbath and other Old Testament observances were abolished at the death of Christ.

*“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a **Sabbath day** — things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:13-17).*

The Scripture says Christ took the decrees out of the way, having nailed them to the cross. Therefore, we are not to be judged any more concerning food or drink (dietary laws), or the observance of special days (including Sabbath days) or seasons. One commentary states:

*“The word judge here is used in the sense of pronouncing a sentence. The meaning is, ‘since you have thus been delivered by Christ from the evils which surrounded you; since you have been freed from the observances of the law, let no one sit in judgment on you, or claim the right to decide for you in those matters’” (Albert Barnes).*

The apostle Paul, by inspiration declares that the Sabbath day has no more significance to us any more than the feast days, etc. We do not live under the Old Testament system at this time.

(4) Sabbath is mentioned 59 times in the New Testament, and therefore must be binding.

Response: As a matter of fact, the Temple is mentioned 115 times, yet we are not obligated to go to the temple for worship today, while there was such a command in the Old Testament. “The people of the land shall also worship at the doorway of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the new moons” (Ezekiel 46:3).

Circumcision is mentioned 55 times in the New Testament yet is not bound. In Acts 15, the Jerusalem conference dealt with the problem of Jewish converts seeking to bind circumcision on the Gentile converts. Peter, who was the first of the apostles to go to the Gentiles (cf. Cornelius in Acts 10), stood up and testified, “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” (Acts 15:10). The “yoke” referred to the Law of Moses in general, and circumcision in particular. Yet we know that in the Old Testament circumcision was God’s law for the Jews. “He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, **must needs**

**be circumcised:** and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an **everlasting covenant**" (Genesis 17:13). Note that circumcision was a "must," and that it was an "everlasting covenant." But we note that this "everlasting covenant" was with Israel, and as noted before, was to continue "throughout their generations," so long as the nation existed.

If the necessity of circumcision, which was an everlasting covenant, is no longer bound, then the Sabbath, which was an everlasting covenant was also subject coming to an end. If not, why not?

In addition, Passover is mentioned 28 times in the New Testament, yet we are not told to observe the Passover Feast. In fact, we have a new Passover—Christ. "Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

(5) The women rested the day after the crucifixion, therefore they observed the Sabbath.

Response: All the truth had not yet been revealed. Shortly before his death, Christ told the disciples:

*"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come"* (John 16:12-13).

The full teaching of the New Covenant did not begin to be revealed until the Day of Pentecost—50 days after the resurrection. In fact, the church had not even been established until that day.

(6) Jewish Christians observed the Sabbath in the Book of Acts.

Response: In a period of transition, many of the Jews did not free themselves immediately from the Law. It was mentioned earlier that the conference in Acts 15 dealt with this very matter. Some Jewish converts were insisting that the Gentile converts had to submit to certain provisions of the Law, such as circumcision. But the apostles quickly showed that God had released men from the Law. "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).

(7) Paul kept the Sabbath 84 times in the book of Acts. Acts 13:14-15—two Sabbaths; 16:13—one Sabbath; 17:1-2—three more Sabbaths; 18:1-4, 11—a year-and-a-half—78 Sabbaths.

Response: Acts 18:6-7 removes about 75 of those Sabbaths.

*"But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue."*

When the Jews refused to listen to him, he ceased meeting with them and turned his attention to the Gentiles, who obviously did not observe the Sabbath.

But did Paul go to the synagogues while he was a Christian?

*"To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law"* (1 Corinthians 9:20).

He had Timothy circumcised, not because of the Law, but in order to make him able to go in among the Jews, as his mother was Jewish.

*"Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with*

*him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (Acts 16:1-3).*

But Paul refused to have Titus circumcised. “But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (Galatians 2:3). Neither of Titus’ parents were Jewish, so there was no reason to accommodate the Jews in this situation.

When Paul went into a city, and sought out a place where he could testify to Jews about Christ, where would he go?

*“And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’” (Acts 17:2-3).*

“And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4).

In Acts 17:22, Paul was in the city of Athens preaching to a group of people assembled. “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.’” Just what is the Areopagus (Mars Hill—**KJV**)? “From Ares (the name of the Greek deity of war) and a derivative of 4078; rock of Ares, a place in Athens:--Areopagus, Mars’ Hill.” (**Strong’s Greek Dictionary**). The fact that Paul went to a place that honored a false god certainly does not mean that he worshiped that God. And the fact that Paul went into a synagogue of the Jews does not mean that he went there to worship. He went to both places in order to teach the people gathered there.

If we wanted to address a gathering of Muslims in order to teach them about Jesus Christ, where would be a likely place? How about a mosque, where they gather on Fridays? But that certainly would not mean that I went to worship the Muslim god Allah. So the fact that Paul went into the synagogues on the Sabbath in no way proves that he was “observing” the Sabbath as a good Jew observing the Law

(8) The Law of Moses (ceremonial) was taken away, but the Law of God (the 10 Commandments) remains in force.

Response: This argument is often made, that the fourth commandment (remember the Sabbath), is a part of the Law of God, and the Ten Commandments are still in force, but the other Old Testament commandments are part of the “ceremonial” law, and that is what was removed or taken away.

On one occasion when the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus, he asked them: “Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?” (John 7:19). The 6th commandment forbade killing, yet Jesus said this was a part of Moses’ Law. In Mark 7:10, Christ attributes the 5th command to Moses: “For Moses said, **Honor Your Father and Your Mother.**”

In Luke 2:22-23, a “ceremonial” practice is called the “Law of the Lord.”

*“And when the days for their purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the **Law of the Lord**, ‘Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’).”*

The truth is, nowhere in the Bible is there a distinction between the Law of Moses and the Law of God. That difference exists only in the minds of men. If there is a distinction, it should be made plain in a statement of Scripture somewhere. To date, such a Scripture has not been produced.

Some object with this reasoning: “If the Ten commandments have been done away, then is it OK to murder, commit adultery, and the other things that are mentioned?” An examination of the New Testament reveals that nine of the ten are mentioned in the New Testament, but one is not mentioned—Sabbath



keeping. In the State of Georgia, a new constitution was enacted several years ago. It is against the law in Georgia to commit murder—not because the former law forbids it, but because the present law forbids it. In like manner, murder is against God’s law, not because the Ten Commandments forbade it, but because the Law of Christ, the New Testament, forbids it.

(Note: While going through some of my late father’s (Fanning Yater Tant, 1908-1997) papers, I came across two pages of notes dealing with the first part of this treatise. From those notes, I have expanded the first portion of this material, and then added other material from research.)

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## What Happened To The Church Jesus Built? (#7)

Tommy G. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

Last issue we pointed out how men introduced the doctrines of penance (where penitents had to undergo some form of public humiliation), purgatory (a place of literal fire, where souls with temporal sins, would suffer for a time, until the guilt of their sins were absolved. They would then be allowed to leave for heaven) and auricular confession (where one confesses his sins to a priest, who then has the power to forgive the sinner). There is absolutely no scriptural authority for any of these doctrines. Rather they fall under the condemnation of God, by adding to and changing God’s word (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19; 2 John 9). One cannot go beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6).

Along with these false doctrines men also changed the mode of baptism. In the New Testament baptism was immersion (a burial) in water (Acts 8:35-39; Romans 6:3-6; Colossians 2:12-13). But man, with human wisdom, decided to change the form. At first it was defended as an accommodation for Novatian, who was sick, at death’s door. He wanted to be baptized, but was considered too sick. So, the church he attended agreed to sprinkle him on the condition if he got better he was to be immersed. This was ca. 250 A.D. We are not certain if Novation got well, but his sprinkling set a precedent. Sprinkling for baptism came into general use ca.753 by the edict of Pope Stephen III, and was adopted as doctrine in 1311 A.D., at the council held in Ravenna. It was decreed that sprinkling, pouring, or immersion for baptism was a matter of indifference. As noted above this is contrary to what the Bible actually teaches. Baptism is a burial, sprinkling and pouring are not.

Constantine became Emperor of the Roman empire, ca. 308 AD. Outwardly he became a Christian, but he had little conception of true Christianity. But he saw some advantage to Christianity, since many of them were willing to die for their faith. In 312-313 A.D., at Milan, he issued the Edict of Toleration, stopping the persecution of Christians and granting them freedom of worship. He restored church property, and the apostate form of Christianity began to flourish more rapidly. In fact, Constantine, and the emperors who followed him, wanted to abolish paganism, and promote Christianity. Later emperors, sympathetic to Christianity, even used force to cause unregenerate pagans to nominally turn to Christianity. This military spirit of imperial Rome caused the church now to become concerned about politics. So the church became a state religion. To a great extent, the emperors became the rulers of the church. When decisions had to be made concerning matters of faith, worship or doctrine, the emperor would convene a council. The findings of these councils would be binding by imperial endorsement upon the church.

Constantine had convened the first church council at Nicea in 325 A.D., where the first human creed was written. I’ll have more to say on human creeds a little later. The next year, 326 A.D., he moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, and ca. 330 A.D. had 50 copies of the 27 books of the New Testament prepared. Three of these copies are supposed to be the *Vaticanus*, the *Sinaiticus* and the *Alexandrain* manuscripts, which formed the basis for the **King James Version** of the Bible. This cannot be proved, so it is an assumption.

This combination of church and state introduced into the already corrupted Christianity, set the tone for what would inevitably lead to one man ultimately becoming the ruler or head or as he became known, the Pope (father) of all the churches on earth. But, just as with the change in eldership, it took time.

Apostasy, as we have seen, developed slowly, but step by step it moved further away from the original church of the New Testament. It had started with one man being exalted above the other elders in a congregation. But as it drifted, it picked up steam, so to speak. Nowhere in the New Testament can anyone read of a Universal Bishop, or Patriarch, or Arch-Bishop, Monks, Abbots and such like. Nor can you read of the Mass, Lent, Holy Water, Purgatory, Auricular Confession, Celibacy of priests or the buying of indulgences to escape Purgatory. But with all these changes just mentioned, the corrupted church is headed for the crown jewel of their apostasy, the appointment of one man to take the place of Jesus on earth.

By the time of Constantine, the corrupted church had divided itself into five areas of influence in the world, Rome, Antioch, Ephesus, Alexandria and, Constantinople. Each of these districts had an Archbishop or Patriarch presiding or ruling over his domain. It was human nature that one of these five men would want to dominate all the others. But none had the power, or force of arms, to overrule the rest, that is until 606 A.D.

By the latter part of the 6th century AD, the contest for supremacy had narrowed itself to a contest between Constantinople and Rome. About 588 A.D., John the Faster, Patriarch of Constantinople assumed the title of Universal Bishop. But since his power to rule depended on the Emperor in the east he failed in his attempt, because the Lombard kings of the western part of the world supported the Patriarch of Rome. This attempt caused a break between the two areas. Gregory, Patriarch of Rome, had the Lombard kings to back him, so in 606-607 A.D. he declared himself to be the universal ruler of all the churches on earth, claiming to be the successor to Peter, thus the source of all authority. He took the name, Boniface III. Thus the apostate Roman Catholic Church was born, in Rome, in 606-607 A.D. As I close, let me point out, that there is no proof that Peter ever went to Rome, and he certainly was never given the title of Pope. To claim he was is a blatant falsehood of the highest order.

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## Understanding The Church of Christ (3)

Wayne Fancher | Searcy, Arkansas, USA

In my last article I tried to show that the first covenant, the Old Testament, was a covenant made between God and the Children of Israel. In Acts 15 we learned that the Gentile converts to Christianity did not have to keep the law of Moses or be circumcised in order to be saved. The logical question that would follow is, do the Jews that are Christians have to keep the law of Moses and be circumcised to be saved? Exactly where does the law of Moses, the first covenant fit into Christianity? It is our answer to these questions that is truly a foundational doctrine of the Church of Christ that must be understood to understand why we in the Church of Christ do what we do in our service and worship to God.

Hebrews 8:7: "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second."

Hebrews 10:4: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins."

The primary fault with the first covenant was that animal sacrifices under this covenant could not actually take away sin from the soul of the person offering the sacrifice.

Galatians 3:24-25: "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

The law of Moses was given to the Children of Israel to help bring them to Jesus the Christ, so when the Christ did come into the world the Jews would have faith in the Christ. However, the law of Moses was called a tutor here in Galatians 3:24-25. A tutor is temporary to bring you up to a certain point and once the tutor had served its purpose, you are no longer under the tutor. Once the law had served its purpose in

bringing the Jews to Christ and salvation through faith in the Christ, the Jews were no longer under the tutor, the law.

### **The Annulling Of The First Covenant**

Hebrews 8:13: "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

Hebrews 7:12: "For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law."

Hebrews 7:18: "For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,"

Hebrews 10:9: "He takes away the first that He may establish the second."

Colossians 2:14: "having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

The first covenant was obsolete. So with the coming of the Christ and His death on the cross, God took the first covenant away, nailing it to the cross. The blood of the Christ was the blood of the New covenant that established the New Covenant and brought it into force. So what took the first covenant out of the way, the death of the Christ, is the same thing that brought the new covenant into force.

Matthew 26:28: "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Hebrews 9:15-18: And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. 16 For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

As Gentiles we were never under the first covenant. The first covenant was between God and Israel. The Old Testament functioned as a tutor to bring the Jews to Christ and faith in Him. Once it had served its purpose the Jews were no longer under the tutor. The first covenant was taken out of the way and annulled when the Christ was nailed to the cross and the New covenant was brought into force.

### **Trying To Be Bound Under Two Covenants**

*Romans 7:1-4: Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. 4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.*

*Galatians 4:21-26 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are*

*the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children — 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

Galatians 4:30-31: *Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*

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## **When I Survey The Cross**

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

Isaac Watts in 1707 wrote a song which is entitled “When I Survey The Wondrous Cross.” It is such a beautiful hymn which should make us all consider what God has done for us through the death of His Son when we sing it. When you allow your mind to deeply contemplate Jesus’ death on the cross, what do you see? Let me suggest a few things we should all consider.

The extreme cruelty of men. Did Jesus suffer such an ignominious death because of some great crime He had committed toward mankind? Absolutely not! Peter said, “...who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil...” (Acts 10:38). He committed no sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). He harmed no one. Yet even before being crucified, He was spit upon, struck in the face, scourged, had a crown of thorns placed on His head, was mocked and ridiculed. Eventually He was nailed to the cross to experience one of most painful and cruel deaths known to man.

Man’s rejection of God. “He came to His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). What more could the Lord have done to convince the Jews that He was the Messiah who had come to save mankind? The miracles He performed, the words He spoke, His compassion, His humble and loving spirit and the deeds He did were clear manifestations of who He was, the Son of God (Matthew 14:33; 27:54). Yet the words of those who surrounded the cross are reminders of their rejection of Him. “He saved other – himself he cannot save”; “let Him come down from the cross and we will believe Him”; “He trusted God let Him deliver Him,” etc. (Matthew 27:41-44). They rejected Him despite all He had done to convince them He was the Christ. The cross was the ultimate rejection.

How terrible my sins really are! I am so afraid we can see how appalling the sins of others are, yet not realize it was because of our own sins the Lord was crucified. The writer of the book of Hebrews said that Jesus tasted or experienced death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9). I know I am a sinner because I have violated the laws of my Lord (Galatians 5:19-21) and I need forgiveness. Even while I was a sinner Jesus died on the cross, so my sins could be remitted (Romans 5:8). In the song “Rock Of Ages,” the second verse says, “Thou must save, and Thou alone: In my hand no price I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling.” I have nothing with which to pay for my redemption, it took the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).

I see the greatness of God’s love. If you have a son or daughter, think of allowing him or her to die so the vilest of sinners could be saved. This is exactly what the Father has done for us. In John 3:16, we find the word “so.” God so loved the world, an adverb denoting degree. The extent of Jehovah’s love is seen in the gift of His Son. Yet Jesus willingly suffered death on the cross so that all men could be saved (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16). He laid down His life for us. There is none worthy of such love. He died even to save those who put Him to death; “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). Truly amazing love.

When we survey the cross, seeing what was done for us, it should motivate each to live for Him, always putting Him first in our lives (Matthew 6:33). Let us give thanks to God, His Son, and Spirit for all the blessings which we can enjoy because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. What do you see when you

## Christmas Facts

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

1. The Bible does not give the date of Jesus' birth. The only time December 25th is recorded in a Bible is when people write it there.
2. The Bible does not specify the number of wise men who went to worship Jesus (Matthew 2:1-2).
3. The wise men never saw Jesus in a manger. They met Him in a house (Matthew 2:11), nearly two years after His birth (verse 16).
4. The shepherds did not follow a star to Bethlehem to find Jesus. An angel informed them of His birth (Luke 2:8-10), when they were in the fields with their flocks, which would not have been in the winter time. They were the ones who saw Jesus in a manger (verse 16).
5. God did not institute a celebration of Jesus' birth in Christian worship. Jesus wants His disciples to remember His death every Sunday in the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). He said to "do this in remembrance of Me" (verse 24).
6. "The first notice of a feast of the nativity of Christ occurs in a Roman almanac...which indicates that the festival was observed by the church in Rome by the year 336" (**New Encyclopedia Britannica**, Christmas, p. 383).
7. "December 25th was already a festival day for the sun god Mithra and appealed to the Christians as an appropriate date to commemorate the birth of Jesus" (**The Lincoln Library of Essential Information**). [See also Feast of Saturnalia.]

I am all for the social customs that stem from Christmas, but in no sense may I declare it a holy or sacred day without the authority of God (Galatians 4:10-11). And I certainly may not participate in worship that is contrary to His will (John 4:24). Paul warned:

*"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?"* (1 Corinthians 10:21-22).

While he permitted saints to eat meat sacrificed to idols (if their conscience allowed it, 8:7), he did not support saints who joined in the worship services of those idols. He adamantly warned them to "Flee idolatry" (10:14). Likewise, I may enjoy the family traditions of Christmas, but in no way am I to celebrate it as the birth of Christ. This doctrine descends from the minds of men and is an addition to and violation of what Jesus wants in worship.

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## God Only Needs One Stone

William J. Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

Goliath, the Philistine giant, challenged Israel to produce a champion to fight him one on one. The loser's people would serve the victor's nation (1 Samuel 17:8-10). Israel did not send out a man, rather they were dismayed and greatly afraid" (1 Samuel 17:11).

David was too young to be in the army, but his oldest three brothers were there. Jesse sent David to his brothers and the captains of the men with provisions (1 Samuel 17:13-18). The giant issued his challenge again after David arrived in the camp, and the young man heard it. He was enraged that this "uncircumcised Philistine ... should defy the armies of the living God" (1 Samuel 17:26). Not long after, he was before the king, and confidently declared, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:32).

Saul tried to discourage him. You're too small. You're too young. You're too inexperienced. But as David explained to Saul why he believed he could take the giant down, it had nothing to do with his size, his age or his experience.

*The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear,  
He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:37)*

The king tried giving David his armor, but he refused. Since Saul was head and shoulders above all others in Israel (1 Samuel 9:2), the armor would have been more of a hindrance than a help. Plus, David's confidence wasn't in the tools of warfare, but in the God of Israel. Notice what he said to the giant before he slew him:

*You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand ... then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands. (1 Samuel 17:45-47)*

He was able to stand before this monster of a man because he trusted in the LORD, not himself. What an exceptional example for us when the Goliaths of life stand in our way and challenge our faith.. The battle is the LORD's, and He will give us victory if we stand in faith and not shy away in fear (Psalm 44:6-7).

As great as David's faith was, I want you to notice something. In verse 40, he took his staff, his sling, and count them, 1-2-3-4-5 smooth stones. David felt that 5 stones would be sufficient. Some of us may have grabbed up every stone from the brook and still felt as though we didn't have enough. But God only needed one stone.

The apostle Paul wrote about the LORD and his ability:

*[He] is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us... (Ephesians 3:20)*

The LORD is more than able. He is able, whether we take 1 stone or 5, to give victory. David's faith was in God's ability, not his own. He brought the stones and the sling, but God gave the victory. Let us pick up our stones and confront the giants we face in life, confident in the LORD God. All He needs is one stone.

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## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BIBLE

### The Unified Story of the Bible

Sean P. Cavender | Bald Knob, Arkansas, USA

In our final study of getting to know the Bible, it is fundamentally important that we perceive the Bible from its beginning to end. The Bible is revealing the message of redemption through Jesus Christ a little at a time. If we can understand this then we can appreciate the Bible in a new way that we've ignored before.

After Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, God cursed Satan, prophesying of his ultimate demise and destruction (Genesis 3:15). This would be accomplished through the seed of the woman—a child that would be born. A few chapters later in the book of Genesis we are introduced to a man named Abraham. God promised that from Abraham He would make a great nation and that through Abraham's seed all nations of the earth might be blessed (Genesis 12:2; 15:4). Abraham would have a descendant that would eventually multiply, creating a great nation, and from that nation the Messiah would come forth.

Abraham and his wife Sarah had a son named Isaac. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the chosen one and he had 12 sons. From these 12 sons came the nation of Israel and their 12 tribes. The Israelites were eventually enslaved in Egypt, but God sent Moses as a deliverer, prophet, and lawgiver. Moses spoke of a prophet who would come and be greater than he (Deuteronomy 18:15). This foreshadows the coming Christ who we must listen to.

Later in Israel's history, God raised up a king after his own heart—David. God made a promise to David that He would establish his throne and his kingdom forever by giving him a son who would reign eternally (2

Samuel 7:16). The prophets spoke of this covenant God made with David as something that would be fulfilled through a virgin giving birth to Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) and the Messiah being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

All of these promises were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem. He is Immanuel—God being made flesh. He was of the lineage of David and a son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1). He came to defeat Satan and crush him (Matthew 12:29; 1 John 3:8). He is the Christ, the Son of God, whom we must hear and obey (Matthew 16:16; 17:5). He fulfilled the prophecy of Moses (Acts 3:22).

Being a descendant of David, Jesus is the rightful king. God has fulfilled His promises, all of them, even concerning the kingdom. He has appointed Jesus to sit on the throne of David (Acts 2:30, 33). Jesus is reigning as king in heaven over the eternal kingdom (Colossians 3:1). You may become a part of His kingdom when you trust and obey Christ (Acts 2:38) and are translated into the kingdom of Christ, the church (Colossians 1:13).

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## Things to Which Salvation Is Attributed

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

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- God - 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Revelation 7:10; Revelation 19:1
- Grace of God - Ephesians 2:5, 8; Titus 2:11
- Mercy of God - Titus 3:5
- Power of God - 1 Peter 1:5
- The Longsuffering of Our Lord - 2 Peter 3:15
- Christ - Matthew 1:21; 18:11; Luke 9:56; 19:10; John 3:17; 10:9; 12:47; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 7:25; James 4:12
- Holy Spirit - Titus 3:5
- Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ - Romans 5:9-10
- Name of Christ - Acts 4:12
- Grace of Christ - Acts 15:11
- The Gospel - Romans 1:16
- The Word - James 1:21
- Words - Acts 11:14
- Preaching - 1 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 2:16
- Preachers - 1 Timothy 4:16
- The Scriptures - 2 Timothy 3:15
- The Love of the Truth - 2 Thessalonians 2:10
- Calling on the Name of the Lord - Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13
- Belief - Luke 8:12; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:8-9; Ephesians 2:8
- Repentance - 2 Corinthians 7:10
- Confession - Romans 10:10
- Baptism - Mark 16:16; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21
- Work - Philippians 2:12
- Obedience - Hebrews 5:9
- Church Discipline - 1 Corinthians 5:5
- Losing Our Life for Christ - Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33
- Hope - Romans 8:24
- Endurance - Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; 1 Corinthians 15:2
- One Who Converts a Sinner - James 5:20

**Salvation is not only by anything!**

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# For to This You Were Called

## INTRODUCTION TO FIRST PETER

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

The writer identifies himself in the first verse of the book: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1). Thus, for the Christian there is no doubt the apostle Peter is the author. This assures us the book of First Peter is inspired Scripture (cf. Ephesians 3:1-7), written with full apostolic authority (Luke 22:28-30), and is thus "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and authoritative for our guidance to eternal life (2 Peter 3:1-2).

The apostle used Silvanus (Silas) either as the penman for his book or the messenger who delivered it (1 Peter 5:12). Of course, Silvanus himself was a prophet (Acts 15:32), was Paul's companion on his second journey of preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 15:40), and joined Paul in writing two books to the church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

Peter sent greetings to the brethren from Mark (John Mark), whom he calls "my son" (1 Peter 5:13), probably meaning his son in the faith (cf. 1 Timothy 1:2). Mark was the son of the Mary in whose house the church was meeting to pray for Peter when Herod had imprisoned Peter with the intent of killing him (Acts 12:12), and he was also the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). He began the first journey to the Gentiles with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:5) but turned back (Acts 13:13). Thereafter, Paul was unwilling to trust him again as a travel companion (Acts 15:37-40). But by the time Paul was imprisoned, Mark had regained his confidence (Colossians 4:10; Philemon verse 24; 2 Timothy 4:11). Of course, Mark is the author of the gospel account which bears his name and has been considered throughout church history as Peter's spokesman in writing that gospel account.

### To Whom Written

The author also identifies his immediate audience in the first verse: "To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). A "pilgrim" is a person "residing in a country not one's own, a sojourner, stranger" (Mounce. 1236), "an alien, sojourner" (Vine. 471). The "Dispersion" (Greek, "diaspora"), "is the comprehensive designation applied to Jews living outside of Palestine and maintaining their religious observances and customs among the Gentiles" (ISBE, cf., John 7:35). From 722 B.C. Jews had been scattered throughout their known world (cf. Acts 2:5-11) by foreign conquests, beginning with the Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:6) and followed by the Babylonian (2 Kings 24:12-16; 25:1-12).

Is the "Dispersion" here used literally of Jews, or is the term a metaphor for Christians? The apostle's audience were "elect" (1 Peter 1:2) meaning "chosen, select" (Arndt and Gingrich. 242). Peter himself identifies the elect as the Gentiles who had formerly not been the people of God but had taken the place of national Israel as

*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy* (1 Peter 2:9-10).

They include all, both Jew and Gentile, who have come to God through faith in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:1-8). Further, Peter's audience had formerly lived in lust through ignorance (1 Peter 1:14; 4:1-2). They had spent their "past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles" (1 Peter 4:3-4). Peter's primary audience is Gentile Christians, though the principles of the book apply to all, both Jew and Gentile until the end of time. Just as ancient Jews in the Dispersion were strangers living in foreign lands among people whose beliefs and customs were totally different from theirs, Christians in every generation are "the Dispersion" and are "pilgrims" in that we are just passing through this earthly realm as strangers to the world and its lusts, while our true citizenship is in heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16; 1 Peter 2:11-12; Colossians 3:1-4).



“Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” were Roman provinces that comprised most of Asia Minor, modern Western Turkey. There is no evidence Peter had ever been to any of these places, but Silas had traveled in Asia and Bithynia with the apostle Paul.

### From Where Written

The apostle sent greetings from Babylon to his audience (1 Peter 5:13). Many have the opinion that “Babylon” is a metaphor for Rome, as it is in the book of Revelation (cf. Revelation 17:5, 18). This is possible, but there is no dependable evidence that the apostle Peter ever visited Rome, much less lived there. Furthermore, we should take language literally unless there are overriding reasons to take it as figurative. The book of Revelation is symbolism, and the apostle John even explains his symbol, but that is not the style of First Peter. The safest position is that Peter, Mark, and Silvanus were in the city of Babylon on the Euphrates River when the apostle wrote First Peter.

### When Written

The apostle Peter wrote his first epistle at a time when John Mark was with him in Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). When Paul wrote his prison epistle to the Colossians (A.D. 62-63), Mark was with him in Rome (Colossians 4:10). When he penned his second letter to Timothy, around A.D. 68, it appears Mark was available to travel with Timothy to visit Paul (2 Timothy 4:11).

A “fiery trial” of suffering for the faith was about to occur (1 Peter 4:12-13). The great fire which consumed most of the city of Rome occurred in the tenth year of the reign of Emperor Nero, A.D. 64 (Schaff. 1:378). The Roman populace suspected Nero of setting the fire, and, to divert blame from himself, he blamed the fire on the Christians, who were misunderstood and hated. By decree of Nero and by popular demand,

*... there began a carnival of blood such as heathen Rome never saw before.... A 'vast multitude of Christians was put to death in the most shocking manner. Some were crucified, probably in mockery of the punishment of Christ, some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the voracity of mad dogs in the arena. The satanic tragedy reached its climax at night in the imperial gardens on the slope of the Vatican.... Christian men and women, covered with pitch or oil or resin, and nailed to the posts of pine, were lighted and burned as torches for the amusement of the mob* (Ibid. 381-2).

Later “Christian writers extend” the persecution “to the provinces” (Ibid. 384).

About A.D. 64, when Mark could have been with Peter in Babylon and just before the persecution instigated by Nero, seems to be the date of First Peter.

### Theme

The apostle’s purpose in First Peter is to prepare God’s elect, Christians, for impending suffering for Christ. The verb for suffering occurs eleven times in the five chapters of First Peter (1 Peter 2:19, 20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17; 4:1 [twice], 15, 19; 5:10), the noun four times (1 Peter 1:11; 4:13; 5:1, 9). It is good to “endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (1 Peter 2:19-20; 3:14, 17; 4:12-16, 19). They would “suffer for righteousness’ sake” (1 Peter 3:14). It is of no value to suffer for our own sins (1 Peter 2:20; 3:17; 4:15). Since we are sharing in the suffering Christ endured for us, it is even a blessing to suffer for Him (1 Peter 3:14; 4:14), and we should rejoice in this suffering (1 Peter 4:12-13). Suffering is a trial of our faith (1 Peter 1:6; 4:12). By so doing we are following the ultimate example of a righteous sufferer. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). We endure suffering with joy because of the hope we have laid up in heaven (1 Peter 1:3, 13, 21). **The theme of First Peter is suffering for righteousness’ sake.**

Divine grace is prominent in First Peter (1 Peter 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19-20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12). Suffering for Christ brings the favor (grace) of God (1 Peter 2:19-20). After we have suffered awhile, His grace will “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle” us. Christians stand in “the true grace of God” (1 Peter 5:12).

Peter appeals to Christians to live a manner of life consistent with our calling. We must be holy as God is

holy (1 Peter 21:15-16). We should love each other as fellow children of our divine Father (1 Peter 1:22-23; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 5:14).

In the face of unjust suffering, Christians live submissive lives. For the sake of the Lord we submit to civil rulers (1 Peter 2:13), employees submit to their employers, even if the employer is unjust and harsh (1 Peter 2:18); wives submit even to unbelieving husbands (1 Peter 3:1, 5), younger Christians submit to older Christians (1 Peter 5:5). Indeed, all Christians must be "submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5-7).

### Outline

- I. Address - 1:1-2
- II. Salvation in Christ - 1:3 - 12
  - A. He blesses God for our salvation. - 1:3-5
  - B. This salvation brings us joy in our trials. - 1:6-9
  - C. It is the theme of the Old Testament prophets - 1:10-12
- III. Our Lives in View of Our Salvation - 1:13 - 2:12
  - A. Be sober, obedient, and holy. - 1:13-16
  - B. In view of your redemption price, live in fear. - 1:17-21
  - C. Love one another, since you have a common Father (the New Birth). - 1:22-25
  - D. Put off sin and desire the word. - 2:1-3
  - E. You who have come to Christ are God's chosen people. - 2:4-10
  - F. Therefore, abstain from fleshly lusts. - 2:11-12
- IV. Relationships and Obligations - 2:13 - 3:12
  - A. Submit to every ordinance of man. - 2:13-16.
  - B. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. - 2:17
  - C. Servants, be submissive to your masters. - 2:18-20
  - D. Christ is our perfect example of suffering for righteousness. - 2:21-25
  - E. Wives, be submissive to your own husbands. - 3:1-6
  - F. Husbands, dwell with them with understanding. - 3:7
  - G. All of you love as brothers. - 3:8-12
- V. Our Lives in View of Suffering - 3:13 - 4:19
  - A. Avoid harm by following good. - 3:13
  - B. If you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. - 3:14
  - C. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. - 3:15-16
  - D. It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. - 3:17
  - E. Follow the perfect example of Christ. - 3:18 - 4:6
  - F. Live in view of the end. - 4:7-11
  - G. If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God. - 4:12-19
- VI. More Relationship Obligations - 5:1-9
  - A. Elders, shepherd and oversee the flock. - 5:1-4
  - B. Humble yourselves. - 5:5-7
  - C. Resist the devil. - 5:8-9
- VII. Conclusion - 5:10-13

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