

# March 2018

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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).

**Sonia Jo Rainwater** | written by William J. Stewart

August 20, 1967 - March 23, 2018

On March 31, a large crowd of family, friends and brethren assembled at the G.F. Zimmer Funeral Home in Chittenango, NY to honor the life and faith of Sonia Rainwater (50), who passed from this life after an 8 year battle with cancer. The chapel was packed. Every seat was occupied. People were standing along both side walls and at the rear. The foyer was also full, and from what I understand, some spilled over into a second room across the hall. I don't know what the head count was, but the message was clear: in the course of her life, Sonia had touched many, many lives. And were it not for distance, scheduling conflicts and other such impediments, the crowd could easily have been much greater.

I was privileged to speak at sister Rainwater's funeral. Among the things I shared with those gathered was the following quote from Philippians 1:

*"...according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:20-23).*

Though her circumstances were different from the apostle Paul's, her focus on glorifying Christ, whether by life or by death is parallel. When the cancer was first discovered, the prognosis was not good. And yet the

Lord granted Sonia 8 years. Eight years so that Christ might be magnified in her body. Eight years to live on in the flesh, resulting in fruit from her labor. Eight years to affect other souls, both Christian and non-Christian, by her faith and devotion to the things of God. And now, by her death, Christ continues to be magnified. Jesus came into the world to save us from sin. And when we pass from here to eternity as a faithful child of God, bought by the precious blood of Christ - the greatness of His sacrifice and the magnitude of His love are on display before all heaven and earth.

Sonia is survived by her husband of 24 years, Tom; two sons, Samuel and Joshua; siblings, Serena, Cynthia and Charles; mother-in-law, Linda; and numerous nephews and nieces.

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## Question from a Gospel Preacher in India

### Questions

Biblical questions for your kind replies.

Dear Brethren in Christ, Loving Greetings from India in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I work to be a minister in a small congregation. I have a few Biblical questions for your kind reply. They are : 1. Are demons fallen angels? What about so called demon possession cases? 2.What are the tricks faith healers use to deceive people? 3. What are the reasons delusions and Hallucinations? Is Bible addressing this problem? 4.Jesus was 30 years during His baptism. How can Bible scholars prove He lived 3 and Half years after His baptism? 5.How can we calculate Patriarchal age is 2500 years? 5. 1 Cor14:34 Tells us even Law tells women are to subject to men and to be silent. But, What about Deborah who served to be one of the Judges of Israelites? Kindly, quote number of scripture to answer my questions. Kindly, Help me and pray that I learn more.

### Answers

The Bible does not directly reveal the origin of either Satan or demons. There are angels in Satan's kingdom (Matthew 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude verse 6), so obviously they are fallen. They may be the same thing as demons, but I don't know that this can be proven. Demons no longer have the power to inhabit or possess people. Zechariah prophesied that demon possession and prophecy would cease simultaneously during the day of Messiah (Zechariah 13:1-2), and prophecy has ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). When Jesus entered hades, He bound the strong man (Satan) and plundered his goods (Matthew 12:28-29). Satan fell from power (Luke 10:17-18; John 12:31; 16:7-11; Revelation 12:7-9), and his ability to physically control people was taken away (Ephesians 4:8-10; Colossians 2:15). Satan's power today is limited to tempting, deceiving, and persecuting us (Matthew 4:1; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:13; 20:10), but we have the power from Christ to overcome him (1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:11-13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Revelation 2:10; Revelation 12:11).

Charlatans still use the same kinds of deceptive tricks that false teachers have always used (cf. Acts 8:9-11; 19:13-16; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). They cannot do what they claim to do. A Pentecostal preacher in Belize challenged me when I taught that miraculous, spiritual gifts had ceased. In reply I challenged him to go to the cemetery with me. I said if he would raise one person from the dead, I would raise two; if he would raise two, I would raise four; if he would raise four, I would raise the rest of the cemetery. He left and never returned. No, I can't raise the dead, but neither can he. Peter and Paul could (Acts 9:36-41; 20:9-12).

Some people have illness, whether physical or mental, which causes hallucinations. For example, it is well documented that both high fever and alcoholism cause hallucinations. Some people see what they want to see. Some deceive themselves into seeing these things in their minds (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

The length of Jesus' ministry is determined by the number of Passover feasts He attended as is recorded in the Gospel of John. We know He attended three (John 2:23; 6:4; 13:1). John 5:1 mentions another feast Jesus attended without telling us the name of the feast. If it was a Passover, Jesus' ministry lasted something over three years, since part of His ministry took place before the Passover mentioned in John 2:23, three years elapsed between the four Passovers, and He died immediately following the fourth

Passover. If the feast of John 5:1 is not the Passover, His ministry may have lasted only two plus years.

By studying Genesis five, we can determine the length of time from the creation of Adam to the sons of Noah (1556 years). By studying the genealogies of Genesis 11:10-26, we can calculate the time between Shem, Noah's son, and Abraham (390 years). Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5), Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born (Genesis 25:26), Jacob was 130 when he and his family went into Egypt (Genesis 47:9), and Israel remained in Egypt 430 years to the day (Exodus 12:40-41). Israel came to the wilderness of Sinai, where the Law was given in three months (Exodus 19:1). This closed the Patriarchal Age for Israel, making the length of the Patriarchal Age 2666 years.

First Corinthians 14:34-35 forbids women to do the kind of speaking in the context, speaking in which they are not "submissive" (verse 34). If they cannot speak at all in the worship assembly, they cannot sing (Ephesians 5:18-19). A woman must not preach to an audience with men present, for preachers should speak "with all authority" (Titus 2:15). Yes, this principle of feminine subjection was also commanded under the Law, in relationship to her own husband (1 Corinthians 14:34; cf. Genesis 3:16). This subjection also applies in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Yes, Deborah was judge of Israel (Judges 4:1-2, 4-5) and issued commands to Barak the commander of the armies of Israel (Judges 4:6-7, 14), and Queen Esther gave commands to her uncle Mordecai (Esther 4:15-17). Women must be in subjection to the men in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-12; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3) and to their own husbands in the home (Ephesians 5:22-24).

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## Question from a Brother in Nigeria

### Question

I read with much interest your article "Autonomy of the local Church (2)" in Jan. Issue of Meditate on These Things. Thanks for your discussion on the topic which remains one of the major sound doctrines of New Testament Church (Church of Christ) which some have erred.

Please may you discuss more on "Church Autonomy/Cooperation" by these my Questions:

(1) Local Churches hosted by a local Congregation on evangelism mission in an area termed or known as "Gospel Meeting" Is the practice Scriptural Cooperation of N T Church?

(2) Gospel Preachers with gospel support from Churches come together preaching in an area by Radio, TV, or any other means. Is such joint work by individual Preachers Scriptural?

Are Churches involved in supporting the preachers in Scriptural Cooperation?

### Answers

Thanks for the good, practical questions.

The evangelistic work of each local church is completely under the control of the elders of that local church (1 Peter 5:1-2). Even in a congregation without elders, its evangelistic work is under the oversight of the men of that church (Acts 13:1-3). It is good for one congregation to share scriptural teaching with other congregations as long as the one congregation maintains entire control of the work (Acts 11:22-23). Thus, it is good for a local church to have a gospel meeting, lectureship, etc. and invite members of other churches to come. But there is no scriptural authority for representatives of a plurality of congregations to meet together to plan a "gospel meeting" or any other work. This is the first step in the formation of an evangelistic association like Baptist churches.

It is scriptural for preachers to work together in an evangelistic effort (e.g., Acts 13:2-3; 15:36-40; 20:1-6; 21:8). However, I could not be part of an organization - a group of disciples with oversight, common resources, and a common work - of such men for evangelistic purposes, for the local church is the organization the Lord has specified to do the work of evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 6-8).

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## Jesus Is God

Patrick Farish | Waxahatchie, Texas, USA

*"Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our Fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.... "*

Before His birth He was named "Jesus" by an angel "for he will save his people from their sins" Matthew 1:21.

These are some of the things we know about Jesus.

1. He was born of Mary, a virgin (Luke 1:26-34).
2. He was God in the flesh; so John writes of him:  
*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us..."* (John 1:1, 14).
3. He was fully and truly man, Hebrews 2:17, 18; and as a man, He "suffered for you, leaving you an example that you might follow in his steps, who committed no sin ..."
4. So when He was tempted, it was a real temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4: 15); He had to make a choice. If His sinlessness was a product of His being God, He was not "one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." And as such He can be no example for man (1 Peter 2:21 - 22 reads, Christ left "an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin...."

### **Jesus Died for Man**

Christians eat the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, as a memorial (1 Corinthians 11:33-36). The memorial is to cause us to reflect, to regularly and deliberately elevate the death of Jesus in our consciousness. The Bible affirms that Jesus died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3), that He "gave himself for our sins (Galatian 1:4); that He "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). He is our great example; but certainly more than that, He died for us.

Because the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) and "all have sinned", it follows that all men are under sentence of death; all men, except Jesus, who was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus, and Jesus only, was without sin; so He, and He only, could atone for sin by the shedding of His blood.

### **Jesus' Church**

Jesus built His church (Matthew 16:18). He is the head of the body, which is His church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Some are advertised as another head, or priest, or pope of Jesus' body, but they are not. A human body has but one head; even so the body of Jesus, the church, has but one Head.

Because Jesus is the head of the body, He is the Lawgiver (Acts 3:22,23). He is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8, 9). To be saved by Jesus (and there is no other Savior) we must do what He says. In John 14:6, Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jesus is Lord. One who is "lord" is master. This aspect of the identity of Jesus is made clear when He asks, Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?" If Jesus is really your Lord, you will be seeking to do His will in all things, at all times.

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## **"I Believe in God"**

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Often, when conversing with people I have just met, such as one who serves my table in a restaurant, in the course of the conversation I will ask "Do you believe in God?" Nearly 100% of the time the response

will be in the affirmative. Now, my question is, "What does it mean to believe in God?" There may be a marked difference in "I believe in God," and "I believe God." I then may ask "Where do you go to church?" And the reply may be, "Oh, I don't go to church. I have my own faith." Here is where the difference begins to appear. They believe that God exists, but evidently, they don't believe what he says through the inspired writer in Hebrews 10:25, which says, "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the habit of some is." And similarly, the apostle Paul, in writing about the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, quoted Christ in these words:

*"This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me'" (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).*

Clear evidence shows that the early church, guided by the inspired apostles, partook of the Supper every first day of the week. But today, many denominations, claiming they believe in the Lord, do not believe what he taught. Some groups take the Supper once a month, once every three months, once a year, or some do not observe it at all. Why? Evidently, they do not believe the teaching of Christ, though they claim to believe in Him. Do you see the inconsistency?

This calls to mind the words of Christ in Matthew 7:21-23:

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'"*

What was the problem? They believed in the Lord, but they did not believe him, inasmuch as they wanted to do what seemed good to them, rather than do what the Lord had authorized. They were practicing "lawlessness," that which was without authority.

Consider Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." What is the message in this passage? What we do in word (our teaching) or deed (our actions) must be "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (by his authority). And where do we go to find what God has authorized? Isaiah dealt with a wayward people who were looking for answers in the wrong places. His response? "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn" (Isaiah 8:20). What is "the law and testimony?" It's the Bible, God's revelation to us!

Consider what Paul wrote about this matter.

*"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).*

This is in keeping with the promise Christ made to the apostles:

*"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 16:13).*

Consider the implications of what Christ told his disciples after his resurrection. "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" (Matthew 28:18) In the end, what does it matter if we choose just to believe in Christ as opposed to believing him? We will let

Christ explain this in His own words. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day." (John 12:48) What will judge us? God's Word!

Jesus emphasized this in his conversation with Satan: "It is written, '**Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God**'" (Matthew 4:4). Dear reader, it is not up to us to determine what part of the Bible is believable, or which is not to be believed. God has not given us that liberty. How can our finite minds determine which parts of God's revelation are true and which are false? We do not have that liberty, or that ability. It is either all true, or it is all false. And while it is not the purpose of this writing to prove the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, there is abundant and absolute evidence that the Bible is true!

Let me illustrate a perfect example of "belief" vs. "believe in." In a conversation with a friend some time ago, we were discussing a Bible teaching, and I mentioned a Bible verse that was contrary to his views on a certain matter. As soon as I mentioned the passage, he said, "I don't believe that." What was it he didn't believe? It wasn't what I said, but what the Bible said. Does he believe in God? Yes, as he is a faithful member of a denomination. But he didn't believe what God said. The words I quoted were not literally spoken by God, but were written by the apostle Paul, one of God's spokesmen to whom the mind of God was revealed.

Paul further emphasizes this in his letter to the church at Thessalonica.

*"For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).*

This is a problem I see in many in the denominational world, as they choose which parts of the Bible they like, and are willing to follow, and which parts they don't like, and thus refuse to follow. I'm afraid there will be a rude awakening at the Judgment Day. "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

*"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).*

On that final Judgment Day, when you stand before the Judge of all the earth, and you are asked to defend yourself, are you willing to risk eternity by saying, "I'm sorry, Lord. I didn't believe what you said through your inspired apostles and prophets"?

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## Rightly Dividing The Word Of God (3)

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

We continue our study of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (God's revealed word) (2 Timothy 2:15). As was pointed out in the first article of this series, many false scriptural conclusions are drawn, then taught and practiced simply because people do not "rightly divide (handle properly) the word of truth."

The first article pointed out that using human opinions ("what I think") instead of a "thus says the Lord," is not rightly dividing the word of God. We are to walk by faith (God's revealed word Romans 10:17), not by sight (what men think or want it to say) (2 Corinthians 5:7). Man's opinion is not God's revelation.

My last article began a discussion of a second area where people fail to "rightly divide the truth" (God's

word). They fail to recognize the difference between the Old and New Testaments. This failure to understand the differences has led people to introduce into the Lord's church several false doctrines, beliefs and practices. The rest of the issue was devoted to showing that the Old Testament as law was not intended to be permanent, but to be replaced by the New Testament (Hebrews 10:9-10) after Jesus fulfilled its requirements (Matthew 5:17-18; Romans 10:4). It was removed, nailed to the cross (Colossians 1:14-17; Ephesians 2:14-17).

When this is pointed out, people then ask, if we are not under Old Testament law, then what purpose does the Law (Old Testament) serve (Galatians 3:19)? Note Romans 15:4. Let me give some reasons why we have the Old Testament in our Bibles today.

While we do not go to the Old Testament for doctrine, there are several things that make it valuable to us today. The inclusion of the Old Testament into the Bible affirms the trustworthiness of the word of God, as inspired of God. Referring to the Old Testament, Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 declares that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." And that would also include what he and the other New Testament writers would write. Peter affirms the same in 2 Peter 1:21, "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." God protected His word and made sure it was preserved and accurately transmitted to man. After Jesus came and fulfilled His mission He promised His disciples they would be given the Holy Spirit to guide them into "all truth" (John 16:7-13; 14:26). After He returned to heaven, His disciples went throughout the world preaching the gospel, and the words they spoke were the "word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). They not only preached the word, they wrote it. They wrote four accounts of the gospel, and 23 epistles in which they quoted 100s of Old Testament scriptures, showing how they were fulfilled in the time of Christ. How could we have confidence in the New Testament writings, if the Old Testament was unreliable and corrupted through the years? The New Testament writers freely quoted the Old Testament, confidently expecting us to pay attention to them as inspired writings. They wrote, without any hint of doubting the truthfulness of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is also important in helping us to learn of God's omnipotence and omniscience. With His infinite foreknowledge and power, He enabled men to foretell future events with precise accuracy. In the Old Testament we can read many of these prophecies and see them fulfilled years, sometimes centuries, later. In preparing the world for the coming Messiah, Christ Jesus, God gave over 300 prophecies concerning the advent of His Son and His purpose for coming into the world. Everyone of them was fulfilled (Luke 24:44-45).

But we also learn that prophecy was sometimes more than mere predictions of future events. Yes, there was a predictive element to them, but it would be hard for us to obey a prophecy. But the prophets also spoke many moral and spiritual truths that are just as true today as when they were first spoken. As I have shown, it is true that the Law of Moses and the ten commandments are no longer binding on us, but the principles of truth embedded in them are still binding today. In fact, the moral laws existed even before the Jews received the ten commandments. All mankind were sinners, even before God gave the written law on Mt. Sinai to the Jews. His moral laws were binding even on the Gentiles (Romans 2:12-15). Therefore, the moral and spiritual truths taught in the Old Testament are still binding today. The truths were more than man's opinions, they are the authoritative word of God.

We learn from the Old Testament that the written record was no accident. The things were written on purpose by inspiration. They were written as a record to be read by future generations (2 Peter 1:12-15). Peter tells his readers his writings are not just for them. He then points that the Old Testament writers wrote the word of God that was inspired.

It is from the Old Testament we learn the origin of the universe and why it functions with such order and precision. We also learn of the origin and nature of man (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7-8, 21-25) and how sin came into the world. We then learn how God dealt with sinful man in the past. We see what He did when men did what they were told to do, and what He did to those who refused to listen to Him. Moses, king Saul, and

the young prophet of 1 Kings 13 are just a few examples of how He reacted when men failed to respect and honor His commands. They are examples for us today. His demands on mankind are no different today. He still expects reverence and obedience, just as He did then (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

So, you see, that while we no longer go to the Old Testament for law, since it was taken out of the way by the cross of Christ, there are certainly a lot of things we can learn and benefit from in a study of the Old Testament. It was written for our learning, not law (Romans 15:4). Let's make sure we "rightly divide the word of truth."

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## **Flea Market Mentality**

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

("flea market"; "a market, often outdoors, consisting of a number of individual stalls selling old or used articles, curios and antiques, cut-rate merchandise, etc." - dictionary.com)

I don't know about you, but I enjoy visiting flea markets, antique shops and even stopping off at an interesting looking yard sale from time to time. Part of the enjoyment is finding something that you would like to have and see how cheap you can buy it. My dad seemed to be a master at getting the seller to take less for the goods being sold. I'm so afraid that this type mentality has affected people religiously speaking as well. It seems they want to bargain with God and see if they can obtain salvation at a reduced rate.

Some want God to save them, even though they only want to assemble and worship when it is convenient. You can read them Hebrews 10:25, where it says not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but they simply ignore it and continue to be absent from several assemblies every week. They go other places and do other things but can't come together with other Christians for periods of Bible study and worship. I've had some tell me they can't sit for two hours for Bible study and worship, yet they will sit in the same chair at home for hours on end and watch TV. I've even seen some who would sit on hard bleachers at a ball game or at a political rally for hours, yet that is too much to expect from them when it comes to serving God. Lord I'll let you save me, but only at a reduced rate. Don't expect me at every service!

There are others who fully expect to have eternal life given to them by our Heavenly Father, while continuing in their sins. They've not repented in changing their mind about sin and turning from their iniquities to serve God. They lack the fruit of repentance in their lives (Matthew 3:8). It may be that they still curse or swear, social drink, use tobacco products, watch filthy TV shows, view pornography, dress immodestly, may even be living in adultery, etc. Lord I expect salvation, but at a discount. I'm still going to practice my favorite sins!

I've seen some that would be at every service and morally they were above reproach. Yet when it came to working for the Lord, they simply refuse. It was not a matter of having the talent and opportunities, but they didn't want to put forth the effort or to infringe upon their time to be effective workers in the kingdom. Jesus said those that would be greatest in the kingdom, are those who would be servants (Matthew 20:26). Faithful men and women will do all they can to teach others the gospel (2 Timothy 2:2). Listen to the words of the prophet, "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand" (Ezekiel 3:18). Lord I'll let you save me, but only if the price is reduced. I will do little or no work in the kingdom!

Then we have those who will not strive to grow and develop as Christians. They remain babes who need milk and cannot partake the solid food offered to the mature disciple in the word of God (Hebrews 5:12-14). They will not give themselves to reading and studying the Scriptures (1 Timothy 4:13-15; 2 Timothy 2:15). Very seldom will you find them at Bible studies, and if they are present, they will not have their lesson prepared. Oh yes Lord I want the salvation that is offered through the blood of Christ, but on my terms. I'm not going to spend much time reading my Bible!



We have a very serious problem; God does not offer salvation on sale. He will not come down on the price. It requires our obedience and faithfulness to His will (Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 2:10). Don't think for a minute that you can obtain eternal life at a reduced rate. God will not bargain with man. You will lose your soul if you try such tactics. Jesus tells us to count the cost of being His disciple (Luke 14:26-35). You must pay the full price. There are no discounts.

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## Understanding The Church Of Christ (7)

Wayne Fancher | Searcy, Arkansas, USA

In my last article i tried to explain why many in the Church of Christ view the New Covenant as a covenant of grace and truth, and that truth is law by which we are going to be judged in the last day. In today's article I would like to explain how many of us interpret and apply the law in the New Covenant. In order to explain how gave us the truth in the New Covenant, I would like to show you from scripture how Jesus used the truth of the first Covenant to establish scriptural authority for His actions in His obedience to God.

Matthew 4:7: Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God'" (Deuteronomy 6:16).

In Matthew 4:7 we see Jesus quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 to Satan explaining why it would be sinful for Jesus to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. As I stated in my article last week, "commandments are not suggestions or options from God; they are commands that God expects us to obey by faith."

2 Kings 5:12 : "Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?"

If you answer Naaman's question here in 2 Kings 5:12 you will come to understand a major way in which all the commands of God are meant to be obeyed by faith. To be cleansed of his leprosy Naaman had to wash in the Jordan seven times because this is specifically what God had commanded of him through the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings 5:10. Any other river would have been disobedience and only six times in the Jordan river would have been disobedience. The simple lesson is this. When God is specific in His commands, that requires specific obedience.

Matthew 21:12-13:

*"Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," but you have made it a den of thieves" (Isaiah 56:7).*

In the text here Jesus is explaining why he is casting the money changers and those who sold doves out of the temple. His action is driven by the authority of a statement of truth about the temple found in the scriptures in Isaiah 56:7. That statement of truth about the house of God being a house of prayer eliminates the house of God being used as a location to buy and sell animals or exchange money as money changers.

In the next article we will continue to study how the Son of God used the word of God to establish scriptural authority for His actions and beliefs.

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## When Christians Commit Suicide

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

We like to believe that a child of God would never intentionally take his life, but history has shown a different reality. Christians sometimes commit suicide. Some because they were not of sound judgment (and hopefully not accountable for their actions), but others because of mental turmoil. They respond to their misery in the manner of Judas, who was so disgusted with himself (after betraying Jesus) that he “went and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:5). Unfortunately, there have been other people of God who also resorted to self-murder to escape their problems. If we believe what God says about not getting opportunities beyond the grave to repent and that our eternal judgment will be based on our earthly choices (see 2 Corinthians 5:10), we should not want to go before Him as a murderer. We should think of other ways to respond to life’s problems.

When people commit suicide, they are failing to see the reality of their situation. There is nothing in life that is permanent or worthy of continual misery, because everything is temporary. “There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after” (Ecclesiastes 1:11). This is true of our accomplishments as well as our mistakes. The time is coming when this world will know nothing about our name, our problem, our concerns or our present situation. Honestly, are you distressed over the trials people had years ago with their health, finances, reputation or family? Do you even know anyone’s name from a thousand years ago, much less everyone else who lived then? So it will be with us. If life continues, a generation will rise who will not even know we were here, nor will they be concerned about the problems we faced. “For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:6). Since this is so, why should we destroy ourselves for a moment in time? Why throw away the eternal for that which is fleeting? Life is too short to respond this way! Everything about our earthly existence is a vapor in the wind—and we will have an eternity to deal with its spiritual consequences.

It is certain that we are going before God to give an account for our earthly decisions. “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:11-12). Do we really want to stand before Him as a murderer? Is it appealing to us to go before Him having destroyed that which He said is sacred? From the dawn of time He has been telling men to respect human life. “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6). Honestly, is that a charge we want to respond to, having committed self-murder? Can we look into the eyes of Jesus and say life was too hard to endure? Will it even seem plausible to say that to our merciful Creator and Savior, who will not let us experience any trial we cannot endure? (See 1 Corinthians 10:13.)

The ultimate folly of suicide is it is not necessary. There is no sin we can commit that God will not forgive if we genuinely repent of it and obey the gospel. Peter told sinners who believed in Jesus as God’s Son, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). This same invitation is extended to us by a God who is “rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4) and “ready to forgive” (Psalm 86:5). The Bible says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding...and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:6-7). Unfortunately, Judas did not heed those instructions and let his pride cause him to do something that will likely affect him for eternity (Acts 1:25). How tragic when God’s mercy is available. With so many reasons to press on, why would we betray God by destroying the most valuable thing He let us borrow?

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## Ask!

Joshua Welch | Columbus, Ohio, USA

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7, NKJV).

One verse prior to this oft-quoted passage, Jesus says, “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine...” (Matthew 7:6). Yet, have you ever had a hard time deciding whether an individual could be categorized as a spiritual dog or hog? Clearly, this statement of Jesus implies there are some who will not appreciate the “holy...pearls” of truth. When do we give up? When do we quit trying and “shake off the dust from our feet” and move on to others (Matthew 10:14)? How do we determine the difference between sincerity and insincerity? Several clues are offered throughout Matthew 7. But, the first solution offered:

“Ask...seek...knock” (Matt 7:7).

Contextually, this passage is urging us to pray. Verse 11 says, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” Our Father in heaven is a benevolent God. He will not mock us if we ask. He wants us to ask and He wants to help us make good decisions and improve our discretion. Sometimes we lack good judgment because “you do not ask” (James 4:2).

In the book of Joshua, we find an example which illustrates this text well. Joshua and the people of Israel have been conquering the pagan nations of Canaan’s land, by God’s strength, and the unconquered nations were afraid (Joshua 9:1-2). Fighting Joshua’s God-powered army proved to be futile in Jericho and Ai so a new plan of attack was devised by “the inhabitants of Gibeon” (Joshua 9:3). They craftily pretend to be “ambassadors” from a far away nation and seek a peace treaty with Joshua and Israel (9:4-6). They even have costumes and props to sell their false story!

Now, if God’s people give their word they must keep their word. Promise-keeping is serious business with a God who keeps His promises! The Gibeonites, knowing this, were using the honesty of the Israelites against them. The “men of Israel” were suspicious and skeptical of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:7). Yet, when lied to by these crafty men they swallow the lie wholeheartedly and make the covenant (Joshua 9:9-13).

The Gibeonites were Old Testament wolves in sheep’s clothing. They were enemies pretending to be allies. How could Joshua and the leaders of Israel have been so foolish as to have made a covenant of peace with a people who were sworn enemies and who would endanger the safety of God’s people? The answer is found in Joshua 9:14, “...they did not ask counsel of the Lord.”

When we are making judgment calls we need to ask for God’s help. Husbands, wives, parents, teachers, government officials, healthcare workers, police officers, employers, elders, deacons, Christians are all called upon to make judgment calls. Prayer must accompany those decisions. To lead in those situations we must pray with confidence God will help (James 1:5). That day, Joshua failed as a spiritual leader. He would learn from his mistakes. Will we learn from them? Do not quit asking, seeking and knocking. “Pray for one another” (James 5:16).

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## Is Sin Inherited?

Sean P. Cavender | Bald Knob, Arkansas, USA

One troubling teaching that is widely accepted in many denominations is the doctrine of total hereditary depravity. This doctrine uses several verses in Scripture as proof texts to make an attempt to provide biblical support for this teaching. A few of the most popular verses used to prove this teaching are:

“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment...” (Isaiah 64:6)

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...” (Ephesians 2:1)

“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...” (Romans 5:6)

Some use Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” While this psalm is certainly describing the guilt, shame, and despair of sin, seeking God’s mercy, it does not teach David was born with a sinful nature. David is using hyperbole, exaggerating, the circumstances of sin. When we are convicted of sin, we should see how we stand before God. We are spiritually dead, with no life. There is nothing to rejoice in. Birth is a time of celebration and rejoicing, but for David, his conception and birth was tainted by sin. However, for the life of a faithful believer, David was able to say he trusted in God from birth (Psalm 22:9-10). There’s no contradiction here. David is not suggesting in Psalm 51 that he was born in sin and in Psalm 22 he was believing in God from conception and birth. He is picturing the way we should see life. A life of sin is a life of death; a life of belief in God is a life of blessing and confidence.

These Bible verses do absolutely and unequivocally affirm that sin is displeasing and disgusting to God, sin causes us to be dead (separated) from God, and that we were helpless and in need of a Savior. Without Christ and without the grace of God then we were hopeless and without God. Also, it must be acknowledged that sin is a universal problem, for everyone has sinned. The question that concerns us today, “is sin inherited and am I born as a sinner, bearing the guilt of sin?”

When the above verses are read or quoted in a defense of the doctrine of total inherited depravity, or original sin, something is always assumed and asserted – that we were born in such a condition. It is argued that because of Adam and Eve’s sin in Genesis 3 that we are born spiritually dead. However, that is never stated in any of these verses. It is always assumed and just asserted without proof! These verses do not teach that we are born in sin. For instance, Isaiah explains that our works are like filthy rags, but what caused that? “For we sinned, we continued in them a long time,” Isaiah explains in Isaiah 64:5, but Isaiah does not tell us that we were born in sin, spiritually dead. Our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2).

Sin is the result of us yielding and giving in to temptation. “Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin...” (James 1:15). Paul tells us that we were the “sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2) and that we were “indulging the desires of the flesh” (Ephesians 2:3). These were the choices, decisions, and manner which we lived our lives that caused us to be spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1).

Sin is not inherited and passed down from generation; rather, sin comes as a result of our choice to disobey God. Adam and Eve left us a poor example to follow and all have followed their example, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). However, there was One that was born that chose to perfectly obey God in all things, even to the point of death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). He is our Savior! Will you obey God, crucifying and burying the old man of sin and be raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-6)?

“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin” (Romans 6:6)

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## **The Greatest Book in the World**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### **Introduction**

If ever there were a people endangered of being buried alive beneath the mass of their own writings, it is we Americans. We are today overwhelmed by an almost infinite number of books about an almost unlimited variety of subjects. The Library of Congress, the world’s largest library, contains approximately 33 million books, and this number grows daily. One is reminded, “of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

This is a book report. But the volume I am to describe is completely unique in all history. This one book has had more influence on men and has done more good for mankind than the totality of all other volumes

ever recorded. I want to introduce to you the greatest book in the world.

### **Authors**

Who wrote this wonderful book? Approximately forty men over a period of around 1550 years, from Moses in ca. 1500 - 1450 B.C. to John in ca. A.D. 96, took part in writing "the Book." These men not only lived in various times, they came from exceedingly different walks of life - a great deliverer and lawgiver, a shepherd-warrior-king, a priest, a wise and wealthy king, a statesman, a herdsman, a fisherman, a medical doctor, a tax collector, a lawyer, and so on.

### **Subjects**

What is "the Book" about? The authors wrote about many different subjects, such as law, history, love stories, poetry, prophecy of the future, biography, evidences, conditions of churches, advice on how to live, and so forth.

### **Inspiration**

Yet these men all wrote with perfect harmony and unity. Impossible? If they had written without divine aid, yes. For example, do you think ten men today, from the same profession and period of time, all writing separately about just one subject, would agree on every detail? What about forty men from various walks of life and separate times, writing about a wide assortment of subjects? Such "unity in diversity" is possible with this great "Book of books," the Bible, because God is its ultimate author.

The Bible was written by inspiration.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

"Inspiration" is from a Greek word, "theopneustos," meaning "God-breathed." This means the Bible is the Word of God.

### **Revelation**

Also, this great volume was given by revelation.

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles – if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power (Ephesians 3:1-7).*

A "revelation" is an "unveiling" or "uncovering." The Gospel was a mystery, that is, "a hidden purpose or counsel" (J.H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 420). But the Holy Spirit uncovered the mystery to the apostles and prophets, who in turn wrote it down for us to read and understand. Every word of this original revelation was God-given.

*But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*

(1 Corinthians 2:9-13).

### **Prophecy**

Furthermore, the Bible was given by prophecy.

*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21).*

When God commanded Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh, Aaron was to be “as a mouth,” that is a “spokesman” for Moses, whereas Moses was to be “as God” to Aaron (Exodus 4:15-16). When the command was repeated, Aaron was called a “prophet,” while Moses was “as God” (Exodus 7:1-2). Thus, the prophets of God, who wrote the Bible, were God’s mouths or spokesmen.

“Prophecy” is what is spoken for God.

### **Divisions**

The Book of God is divided into two great categories: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

*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 (Hebrews 9:15).*

The Old Testament consists of thirty-nine separate books which may be placed into five categories: law, history, poetry & wisdom, major prophets and minor prophets. The New Testament is composed of twenty-seven books which may also be divided into five categories: life of Christ, spread of the Gospel, special letters, general letters and prophecy.

### **Unity**

But, despite the extreme diversity of this “divine library,” it has a steel cable of unity tying it all together. God’s twofold physical promise to Abraham, that his seed should become a great nation and inherit the land of Canaan, provides the outline for the Old Testament, while the spiritual part of that promise, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed,” completes the Old Testament and ties it to the New Testament.

*Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ ... Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him (Genesis 12:1-3, 7).*

### **Theme**

This grand promise also helps introduce the very theme of the Bible. In Christ we “are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).*

Jesus Christ, the fullness of God’s plan to save the world, is the theme of the Bible. “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (Colossians 1:19). Christ is the great Keynote of God’s beautiful Song of Redemption, and every note in the song is in perfect harmony with that Keynote.

### **Perfection**

How good is this book? It is the one perfect book in all the world. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul (Psalm 19:7a). This means the Bible is absolutely pure, or flawless. "Your word is very pure; Therefore Your servant loves it" (Psalm 119:140). And it is absolutely complete.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

It is the only book which has the power to save your soul. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16). "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21 ). Nor has that power lessened over the centuries.

*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you (1 Peter 1:22-25).*

### Conclusion

This great book of God stands as the unbreakable anvil that can withstand all the hammer blows of unbelievers. As John Clifford so beautifully penned in his poem, "The Hammer and The Anvil":

*Last eve I passed a blacksmith's door  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime,  
When, looking in, I saw upon the floor  
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.  
'How many anvils have you had,' said I  
'To wear and batter all these hammers so?'  
'Just one,' said he, then said with twinkling eye  
'The anvil wears the hammers out you know.'  
And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word  
For ages skeptics blows have beat upon;  
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone!*

Will you not make this marvelous book, the Bible, your rule of life and guide to Heaven?

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