

# June 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

PHILIPPIANS  
4:8

are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

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).

## Fellowship

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Why do many brethren call common meals "fellowship"? The New Testament uses the word "fellowship" to describe communion with God in Christ (1 John 1:3,7), communion with saints in Christ (1 John 1:3), communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16), sharing in suffering for Christ (2 Corinthians 1:6-7), partnership in the work and worship of the Lord in His church (Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 8:23), partnership in financing the Lord's work (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 6:18), partnership in the gospel by support of a preacher (Philippians 1:5; 4:15), and distributing to the necessity of the saints (Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13). The Scriptures nowhere use this word to denote a common meal. Are some so carnally minded their mouths water when they think of fellowship in Christ? (cf. Romans 14:17; 8:6; Philippians 3:17-21; Colossians 3:1-4) We must use Bible words in scriptural ways (1 Peter 4:11). Common meals are no more fellowship than sprinkling is baptism. Such "language of Ashdod" (Nehemiah 13:23-24) indicates unscriptural, denominational attitudes. To pervert a scriptural word to an unscriptural use to justify one's practice is to teach and practice error.

## Pilate's Revenge

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

The Biblical narrative telling the relationship between Christ and Pilate is interesting, and there may be some details that may escape the casual reader's attention. So let's take a few moments to dig deeper into the story.

One question arises as to why the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate's court. For this, we need some

background.

As Jacob neared the end of his days on the earth, he called in his twelve sons to pronounce a blessing upon them and state a prophecy concerning their future. Concerning Judah, he had the following to say: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes" (Genesis 49:10).

The "scepter" refers to ruling power, and we remember that Judah was the ruling tribe following the lineage of King David, and the tribe through which the spiritual king, Jesus Christ, would come. Even after the nation of Judah came under Roman rule, Judah did not lose its tribal identity and the right to pass its own laws, including the death penalty. The Jews more than once charged Jesus with blasphemy when he claimed to be equal with God, and sought to kill him (John 10:31-33) The Law of Moses called for death by stoning. "And he that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, he shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him" (Leviticus 24:16).

But the Jewish rulers lost their self rule, and thus the possession of the scepter, when Herod came to the throne, and the legal power of the Sanhedrin was restricted some years before the trial of Jesus, thus they had to go to the Roman authorities in order to get the death penalty passed. They would have been in trouble had they actually killed Jesus. But all of this had to do with the fulfillment of prophecy. Various Old Testament prophecies describe Christ's death, not by stoning, but in words that would refer to a crucifixion—the piercing of his hands and feet (Psalm 22:16, Zechariah 2:10), his death between two thieves (Isaiah 53:12), etc.

The Jewish Talmud states: "A little more than 40 years before the destruction of the Temple (which would be 30 A.D., as the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.—jdt), the power of pronouncing capital sentences was taken away from the Jews." Remember, this was 30 A.D. This had a profound impact on the Jewish court. Rabbi Rachman says:

*"When the members of the Sanhedrin found themselves deprived of the right over life and death, the judicial power of the scepter, a general consternation took possession of them. They covered their heads with ashes and their bodies with sackcloth exclaiming, 'Woe unto us, for the scepter has departed Judah and the Messiah has not come.'"*

But wait a minute! Who was walking in their midst in 30 A.D.? Jesus Christ! And the prophecy said that the Messiah had to come before the scepter departed, and the scepter departed by 30 A.D. Thus the Messiah had to be in their presence. (Quotes from **The Messiah and Prophecy**, pages 1 and 2 by JDT)

That bit of background helps us understand why the Jews had to take Jesus to a Roman court, since they were restricted from carrying out the death penalty themselves.

Now back to Pilate. We know that Pilate had some concerns or misgivings about the whole process. More than once he said he found no guilt in Jesus. Even Pilate's wife warned him: "And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, 'Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him'" (Matthew 27:19).

Pilate knew the motives of Jesus' accusers was not right. "And Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' For he was aware that the chief priests had delivered Him up because of envy" (Mark 15:9-10).

But he was afraid the Jews would cause trouble for him with the higher authorities if he refused their demands, as they were accusing Jesus of making himself a king rather than Caesar, thus claiming that he was starting a revolt against Rome.

The crucifixion then took place, and Pilate had an inscription placed on the cross, which is recorded in John 19:19-22.

*“And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, ‘JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek. And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews”; but that He said, “I am King of the Jews.”’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’”*

The inscription was written in Hebrew (the language of the Jews), in Latin (the language of the government) and Greek (the common world-wide language, as English is today.)

So, how did Pilate get the “last word” or “revenge” in his disagreement with the Jewish rulers who forced him to do something he didn’t want to do? He wrote the statement of Jesus’ guilt in Hebrew so that it actually portrayed Jesus as YHWH (Jehovah) Himself! There are no vowels in Hebrew, only consonants. The vowels are supplied by the speaker when words are pronounced. The sentence reads “Jesus of Nazareth and the King of the Jews” in Hebrew. We know that Hebrew is read from right to left. The first letter of each word in English is YHWH.

The acrostic formed by taking the first letter of each word of the sentence “Jesus of Nazareth and the King of the Jews” is YHWH – the covenant name of Israel’s God! The English translation of this is “Jehovah.” The YHWH is called the “tetragrammaton” (four writings). This is why the Jewish leaders were not happy with what Pilate had written. He actually wrote that Jesus was Jehovah, and they wanted him to write that Jesus said he was Jehovah, for they believed this was blasphemy.

But Pilate had the last word, much to their dislike. “What I have written, I have written.”

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## **Imitators of God | Ephesians 5:1**

Patrich Farish | Waxahatchie, Texas, USA

An "imitator" is one who follows after, or mimics, someone. Ephesians 5:1 calls for Christians to be imitators; but 3rd John 11 limits it: "Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good."

There are three ways to establish authority or permission to act: command (Acts 10:48), necessary inference (Hebrews 10:25, meet together – place?) and approved apostolic example (Ephesians 5:1, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children”.)

The requirement of imitation has limitations. We must examine the information available to determine if the example is a good one, or a bad one. For instance, the behavior of Peter, as recorded in Galatians 2, is obviously not an approved example.

Here are things that characterize imitators of good. First, Ephesians 5:1, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children”. Our imitation of God embraces such propositions as, God is holy (I Peter 1:14-16); God is light (I John 1:5-7); God is righteous (I John 3:7); God is love (I John 4:8, 16). There is more to it than these; but these make a good start, in our efforts as we seek to imitate God.

We should imitate our leaders. Our “leaders” are the elders (“bishops”, “pastors”). In Hebrews 13:7 we are charged to “imitate their faith.” As they live soberly and righteously and godly before you, respond to their good example by imitation. Christians should appreciate efforts by overseers (bishops) as they watch in behalf of their souls. Elders also should consider their behavior, their choices and their words, not only as they pertain to their personal standing before God, but also as shepherds leading sheep and behave as “those who will have to give an account” (Hebrews 13:17).

Also imitate Jesus Christ, Who displayed perfect patience in dealing with Paul, who described himself as foremost of sinners. In this example grace and mercy are prominent (1 Timothy 1:15-16). Jesus' patience is set out "as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." Our patience is frequently tested in any number of ways, and possibly we are less careful about "passing those tests" than we should be. We must look at our Example, and seek to imitate Him. Patience is part of the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul said to the Thessalonians, you ought to imitate us (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). He was at pains not to burden the brethren, so he provided for his own material needs with "toil and labor." The reason he did that was "to give you in ourselves an example to imitate" (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). There were some among the brethren who "walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies." Paul's words and actions might be intended to correct that situation.

Our heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, and the apostles, and elders, and many saints, are identified as examples to be imitated. The Thessalonians "became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7). We must be receptive to the good examples available to us, and we must redeem our opportunities to be good examples to others.

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## Rightly Dividing The Word Of God (6)

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

A failure to understand this difference between the church universal and the church local has led to at least three false concepts of the church, which we will examine one by one. As we start, I want you to remember something I learned before I started preaching. God designed the church to honor and glorify Him (Ephesians 3:21). He never designed the church to function in any other way than through the local church. A church functioning in any other way is either too large or too small to fit God's plan.

There are three false concepts of the church: (1) a denominational concept in which the universal church is composed of many different churches, all with different faiths, doctrines, practices and systems of worship, (2) a metropolitan form, where several churches are connected together to operate as a team, and (3) an unscriptural functioning of the church, in ways God never intended it to do. Let's examine these false concepts briefly, one at a time.

Denominationalism is the concept that the universal church is composed of many smaller churches. This is not true. The word itself is a divisive word, for a denomination is a part of the whole, and its existence flies in the face of Jesus' prayer that all His followers be one (John 17:20-23). Later, Paul wrote that the church was not to be divided (1 Corinthians 1:10). No, the universal church is not made up of a bunch of denominational churches. Some try to use John 15:1-6, saying Jesus is the vine, and the churches are the branches, but the context shows the branches to be individuals, not churches. The same is true if they try to use the figure of a body made up of many members (1 Corinthians 12:14-26). Again, the context shows that the members are individuals, not churches. Denominationalism is wrong because it is too inclusive (all types of faiths, doctrines, practices) and too permissive (allows human opinion and desires to prevail). It is too large and too small to be the New Testament church.

A second false concept that is developed from a failure to distinguish between the church universal and church local is a metropolitan concept of the church. What is meant by a metropolitan concept is one large church exercising control over a group of smaller or satellite churches, all claiming to be the same faith and practice. This concept is contrary to the New Testament teaching that each congregation (local church) was to be self-governing, autonomous and independent, with no organic tie to any other congregation on the earth. Each local church is to exist and act as if it is the only church on earth. Passages such as Philippians 1:1 (saints, bishops, deacons at Philippi); Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3 (note phrase, the elders "among you") show this to be so. Each church operated with its own organization and

leadership. The metropolitan church organization ignores these facts. The metropolitan church develops when the larger, more influential church becomes the mother or controlling church over the smaller churches under its jurisdiction.

Those who defend this idea believe the church, with an enlarged organizational structure, can function more smoothly and accomplish more, so they connect several churches together like a team. This concept developed several years after the Lord established His church in the 1st century. It eventually led to an even larger organization, with more outward representation and centralization, and ultimately led to the development of the Roman Catholic Church, the first of many denominations to come. The metropolitan concept is much different than the Biblical concept of local church organization found on the pages of the New Testament, where each local church was independent, autonomous and self-governing.

Some may wonder, if it is true that each church is independent, autonomous and self-governing, then can churches cooperate with other churches. If so, how can they do so and be scriptural? In the New Testament we find where churches acted concurrently with each other in doing the work God ordained the church do in evangelism, but the cooperation was never through another church. Each church contributed to support a preacher, but each church sent their funds directly to the preacher, not through a sponsoring church, or some human organization. Second Corinthians 11:8 is an example.

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## "Unless You Eat The Flesh"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

In the first several verses of John 6, we find Jesus on a mountain with a great multitude of people coming to Him because of the signs He had performed on those who were diseased. On this occasion the Lord is going to provide food for them. There is a lad present who has five barley loaves and two small fish, with which Jesus feeds about five thousand men. Later in the evening He and His disciples leave, entering their boat and crossing the sea of Galilee for Capernaum. The following day the people realized the Lord had departed the eastern side of the sea of Galilee, possibly from Bethsaida. They get in their boats and come to Capernaum as well. Notice what He tells the people who had approached Him, "Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26).

It seems this multitude of people wanted Jesus to provide physical food for them, much like the manna God had provided for the children of Israel while they wandered in the wilderness. A far superior bread had been provided them, yet they failed to recognize it. They wanted the food which would perish but the Father had given them something to partake of which would ensure eternal life. Jesus was that bread of life. Just as one must consume physical bread for it to benefit him, he likewise had to partake of the spiritual bread to receive the blessings offered from God.

*"Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6:53-54).

They deemed this "a hard saying; who can understand it" (John 6:60). The word "hard" is defined as, "Of things spoken as hard, harsh, offensive, such as words" (**The Complete Word Study Dictionary – N.T.**). What a shock to hear something like this from the mouth of One they had just called Rabbi (verse 25), while teaching in the synagogue (verse 59). The law had forbidden the consumption of blood and even the eating of meat with blood not properly drained (Leviticus 17:10-16). How offensive this was to those Jews.

The Lord told them "unless" you eat My flesh and drink My blood you have no life in you. This was not an option, but a demand made by Jesus. If they wanted to have spiritual life, with all the accompanying blessings, and have hope of eternal life, then they must consume His flesh and blood. Those who would partake would abide in Him, and He would dwell in them as well. They could have fellowship with the true

bread from heaven (verses 56, 32-33). Offensive? No doubt to some, because of their failure to properly discern the true meaning of what Christ taught. Necessary? Absolutely! There would be no life unless they partook.

How could they eat His flesh and drink His blood? Is He speaking about the emblems of His Supper which His followers are to partake of each Lord's Day to remember His death? Not directly. The Lord's Supper is not under consideration in this text. Look at verse 63, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." You eat His flesh and drink His blood when you partake of His word. This should be offensive to no one. In John 2, when Jesus was about turn water into wine, His mother Mary told the servants on that occasion, "Whatever He says to you, do it" (verse 5). That is what we must do if we are to have life.

How sad on this occasion when the Scriptures reveal, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" (John 6:66). Their desire was for the physical bread instead of the true bread from heaven. Many local churches today are much more concerned about providing physical food for its members rather than having a spiritual feast to enlighten their souls. Not all the Lord's disciples departed on this occasion. Jesus asked the twelve if they wanted to go away (verse 67). Their answer, "But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (verse 68).

Will you eat His flesh and drink His blood? Unless you are willing you have no life in you. To those who love Him, His word is, "More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10). May it be sweet to the taste as we consume it, allowing it to direct our steps in service to our Lord. Eternal life is awaiting!

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## Was the Resurrection a Hoax?

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

Let us assume for a moment that the critics of the Bible are correct and Jesus was not raised from the dead. How then did His body leave the tomb?

**Did the disciples take it?** This was impossible because of the extensive security in place as requested by the Jews. See Matthew 27:62-66. Notice, "So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard." Plus, it seems unlikely that so many of the apostles and first Christians would have died for preaching and believing in the resurrection if they knew the story was a hoax.

**Did the Jews take it?** The very thing the chief priests and Pharisees was trying to avoid was Jesus' body leaving the tomb. "Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first" (Matthew 27:64). Ironically, the security they demanded for the tomb actually gives further evidence to the resurrection; since no one could enter that tomb. Nevertheless, if the Jews had taken Jesus' body, all they had to do to silence the apostles, who preached Jesus was raised from the dead, was to produce the body of Christ. Can you imagine any greater evidence that the apostles were lying than for the Jews to display the body of Christ? The Bible says "the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:1-2). Yet, if they had access to the carcass they would have silenced the apostles forever.

**Did the Romans take it?** This is not even plausible since this would have meant an immediate death sentence for the guards.

No, friends, the only reasonable and rational conclusion is to take the Bible's account of the resurrection. The apostles were eyewitnesses to it. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word

of life" (1 John 1:1).

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we can know several things:

1. **Jesus is truly God's Son.** He is "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).
2. **A judgment awaits us in the afterlife.** "He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).
3. **We have legitimate hope of eternal life with God.** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Are you ready to meet this risen Savior? Is your faith rooted in the evidence He has given of His deity? Have you obeyed His gospel? (Mark 16:15-16)

## A Response to "THE BIBLE VERSUS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST" (3)

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

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 Someone recently pointed me to an article claiming to expose the falsehood of the Church of Christ. We will be responding to the content of the article over a period of several months. The original article, by James L. Melton, can be found at [www.av1611.org/jmelton/chchurch.html](http://www.av1611.org/jmelton/chchurch.html)  
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### The Lord's Supper

"The Church of Christ places far too much emphasis on the Lord's Supper." That is Melton's opening statement on this topic. I disagree with his statement, but I congratulate him on finding the most over-the-top quote he could to support his statement. He cites a Fred Gardner pamphlet which basically makes a linear relationship between "fidelity to" the Lord's Supper and a Christian's focus on our first love and doing the first works (Revelation 2:4-5). Melton retorts, "Revelation 2:4-5 say nothing - ABSOLUTELY NOTHING - about the Lord's Supper." He's right. But, may I also point out, Revelation 2:4-5 also say nothing - ABSOLUTELY NOTHING - about prayer, praise, reading the Bible, kindness, compassion, etc.. Are such things also unimportant and unrelated to faithfulness as a Christian? What proves too much proves nothing at all.

Is there a connection between observing the Lord's Supper and faithfulness to the Lord? Certainly. Is it a linear connection? No. As Melton says, "...you can observe the Lord's Supper fifty-two weeks a year, but if you haven't been born again then your lost and going to Hell, and if your sins aren't being confessed to the Lord regularly, then you are OUT of fellowship with Him, in spite of your faithfulness to the Lord's Supper." Amen! But that doesn't make the Lord's Supper unimportant. It is a memorial of the death of our Lord. By participating in it, Paul says, "you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Each year on November 11, there are events throughout Canada honouring the memory of the armed forces members who died in the line of duty. Why do we do this? Lest we forget. The degree of reflection one gives is far greater if the effort is made to attend a Remembrance Day ceremony over simply pausing for a minute wherever you are at 11:00 a.m.. The ceremony is designed to stress remembrance. The same is true of the Lord's Supper. It is an occasion specifically designed to provoke contemplation and reflection. Does partaking of the Lord's Supper guarantee salvation? Of course not. Does it help focus our minds upon the Christ and the price paid for our salvation? Absolutely.

Melton misrepresents Gardner's statement, inferring that the latter said we must visualize the body and blood of Christ "in order to stay in fellowship with Him" (p. 3). The Gardner quote may exaggerate the relationship of the Lord's Supper with faithfulness, but he certainly did not say "our fellowship with Christ is based on visualizing His body and blood."

How often should we observe the Lord's Supper? Melton is right, neither Matthew 26:26-28 nor 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 say how often. He states we are free to choose how often we partake of the Lord's Supper based on Paul's saying "as often as" in 1 Corinthians 11:26.

A George Baily quote identifies Acts 20:7 as the basis for the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Melton accuses Baily and any who agree with him of "perverting the scriptures." He adamantly states of Acts 20:7, "He said that they came together to BREAK BREAD, not to observe the Lord's Supper. Mr. Baily wants you to think the two are the same, but they are NOT the same." Breaking bread can certainly refer to a common meal (Acts 2:46; 20:11), but Paul used the same terminology in 1 Corinthians 11 to speak about Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper. Notice, "...the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" Breaking bread can be a common meal, but it is not exclusively so. It is likely in Acts 20 that the Christians both partook of the Lord's supper (v 7) and shared a common meal (v 11). Lest it be thought that only "Church of Christ people" think this is a reference to the Lord's Supper, several commentators (Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, John Wesley, Matthew Henry, B.W. Johnson, A.T. Robertson, etc.) also conclude Acts 20:7 is about the Lord's Supper. In fact, Johnson claims, "...the early church writers from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, to Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, all with one consent, declare that the church observed the first day of the week. They are equally agreed that the Lord's Supper was observed weekly, on the first day of the week" (People's New Testament Commentary).

Regarding frequency, a parallel can be made between Luke's statement in Acts 20:7 and the command to the Hebrews about the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8). The Law didn't say "Remember every Sabbath day..." It didn't need to. Every Sabbath is necessarily implied, for every week has a Sabbath (7th day). The Jews understood that. When Acts 20:7 speaks about the practice of breaking bread (cf. Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24), it does not have to state "every first day," since every week has a first day. Can we not see the necessarily implication? But, whether someone is convinced that Acts 20:7 speaks of a weekly observation of the Lord's Supper or not, on what basis would someone oppose a weekly remembrance of the Lord's death? Surely keeping before our minds what the Lord has done for us cannot be characterized as bad. Does Melton contend that it is unscriptural to observe the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis? If not, I fail to understand his hostility over the issue.

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## A Closer Look at the Greek Word "Eis"

Tanner Campbell | Jacksonville, Arkansas, USA

I desire to give due diligence to the Greek word "eis" (pronounced "ice") used in Acts 2:38, "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." There has been a great difference in opinion as to what "for" means in Acts 2:38. Those who view baptism as essential for salvation believe the word "for" demonstrates the purpose for baptism (to have one's sins forgiven). Those who view baptism as unnecessary for the forgiveness of sins, take the position that "for" in Acts 2:38 means "because of," referring to baptism as something done apart from and after forgiveness has been given. Let's take a look at a couple of documented cases of this:

A.T. Robertson, the famous Baptist scholar, wrote in his "**Word Pictures**" entry on Acts 2:38 that baptism is "to be done in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of sins which they had already received." But he lacks any solid evidence for his position on "eis" meaning "because of." Jimmy Swaggart, in "**The Expositor's New Testament**" made a note within Acts 2:38 that

*"for the remission of sins' should have been translated, 'because of remission*



*of sins'; one is Baptized in Water because one's sins have already been remitted due to Faith in Christ, and not that sins should be remitted."*

Making a statement as a fact is one thing, being able to prove it is another thing; which thing Swaggart did not do. Interestingly, A.T. Robertson admits that "One will decide the use [of the word "eis"] here [in Acts 2:38] according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not." Really now? Is that how one treats the holy scriptures, to decide on the use of words based on what we currently accept in our beliefs? This is not how we treat God's Word with honor. Our goal here is not to make the words of the Bible into something that fits our ideas, but to transform our minds that we may be conformed to God's ideas, God's word.

The English word "for" is a big part of the problem in interpreting the meaning of Acts 2:38, because it can be used as a preposition and mean "in order to; for the purpose of, or the need of," which fits the position taken by those who believe Peter is preaching that baptism is done in order to obtain forgiveness. However, the word "for" in English, is also used as a conjunction, thus meaning "because; since, seeing that." This fits the position of a good portion of denominational churches who are convinced that baptism is an outward showing since/because sins were already forgiven prior to baptism. Friends, if we spend our time looking at the English word "for," then we are in a standoff with a 50/50 split, and there is no telling who is right.

However, there is a way to know the truth of this matter, as Luke, by the Holy Spirit, did not record Acts 2:38 in English, but in common Greek. This brings new light to our research as we can now turn to a Greek Lexicon and see the original meaning of the word. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon is the world's most popular lexicon, used by all sorts of religions and denominations. I too, have used this lexicon on a weekly basis in my studies for as long as I've been a Bible student, and can attest to the quality of the information. When turning to Thayer's entry for the Greek word "eis," one thing to point out is that it takes up over three pages, and in very small font. It can be a very exhaustive reading, but this is very good for our purposes to find the truth, because the lexicon is so detailed in defining "eis."

The first thing to note about "eis" is that it is a primary preposition (refer back to the English's use of "for" as a preposition), and unlike the English, it is not used as a conjunction too (because; since). The Lexicon states that "eis" denotes "entrance into, or direction and limit: into, to, towards, for, among." The text goes on to cover the word's variety of usage, which I will concisely record now (please consider how these definitions would affect the interpretation of Acts 2:38): 1. "Of a place entered, or of entrance into a place, into." 2. "To, towards; as if it indicated merely motion towards a destination." 3. "May often be rendered on, upon, unto; to mark the limit reached, or where one sets foot." 4. "Of motion... where it may be rendered to, near, towards." 5. "it denotes entrance into a period which is penetrated; dawning into or towards." 6. "retains the force of entering into anything; where one thing is said to be changed into another; designating the condition or state into which one passes." 7. "It is used of the business which one enters into." 8. "It denotes motion into something; of acts in which the mind is directed towards or looks to something." 9. "It denotes the end to which a thing reaches; the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose; the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect."

After reading the definitions for the word "eis," there can be no doubt as to the kind of word that it is. A word referring to movement and motion made toward something to be completed or entered. If we rightfully treat "eis" in Acts 2:38, then the Holy Spirit said to be baptized in purpose and motion toward God to forgive us of our sins. Since the word "eis" has everything to do with heading in the direction towards something, it is impossible to walk away from Acts 2:38 with the interpretation that remission of sins happened prior to baptism. That is putting the cart before the horse, and the word "eis" will not allow it. In the over three pages of the Lexicon that is dedicated to defining "eis," there is no point where it is defined as "because, since, seeing that" or anything synonymous with those words. It is the assertion of recent false teachers to treat baptism as unnecessary towards the forgiveness of sins, but that is not the opinion of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38, nor is that His opinion when he said that baptism: washes away our sins

(Acts 22:16), and it is how we enter Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:13), and how we become united with Christ's sacrifice and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5), and how we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27), or how we are born again (John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5), and how we become recipients of the Holy Spirit's gift of salvation (Acts 2:38), and when He plainly states that is a part of our being saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21). When we consider all that God has to say on the matter of the necessity of our baptism for the working of God to save us, there is no doubt why God used "eis" in Acts 2:38 to speak of baptism as our motion toward God for the purpose of forgiveness and salvation.

In the Greek New Testament, the Holy Spirit uses this word "eis" 1,767 times! That's a lot! And that's good news because, for a word that is so well used in the biblical text, it will have solid documentation and proof for how it was understood in the First Century. Let's consider some examples.

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Here we can see "eis" serving its purpose in the words of Jesus. By using the definition of "eis," we can see that Jesus taught that the shedding of His blood would be moving toward the purpose of providing forgiveness ("eis" denotes that forgiveness was not yet available). It would not mean that He would shed His blood as an outward sign "because of" the remission of sins that was already made available. I suspect no one would say such a thing, but that is how Acts 2:38 is shamefully treated.

"And He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples"' (Matthew 26:18). Here we see "eis" translated "into," consistent with the word's concept of motion and direction. They were not already in the city for they were told to "Go into the city;" just as in Acts 2:38, when the people's sins were not yet in remission, for they were told to "be baptized... into the remission of sins."

"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). In this text, "eis" demonstrates the old law's purpose to move those under it toward Christ. "Eis" controls the situation and the direction, not allowing Christ before the old law, but keeping the old law before salvation through Christ.

In many other scriptures we can see the true use of "eis" as denoting entrance into or motion toward something: as translated "for" (Acts 9:21, 13:2; Romans 4:3, 15:2; Ephesians 2:22, 6:22; Philippians 1:25; Hebrews 3:5, 6:16, 9:15; Revelation 9:15, 22:2), and as translated "in," "into," or "unto" (Matthew 27:53; Mark 9:28; Ephesians 1:10, 4:13). The evidence overflows throughout the scriptures, and begs the question, if the Holy Spirit wanted to communicate that baptism is "because of" our forgiveness, instead of for the purpose to be forgiven, then wouldn't He have used a word to convey that thought? What about the Greek word "hoti" (the conjunction equivalent to the English "because") which can also be found in Acts 2 (in verse 6), or what about the Greek word "gar" (meaning because of, seeing that, since) which is exactly the word that false teachers really want to find in Acts 2:38, but it's just not there. It is, however, in the next verse (Acts 2:39), and fascinatingly translated "for," using the English ability to use "for" as a conjunction. So then, the Holy Spirit used all three of these Greek words in Acts 2; He was not limited in His knowledge of Greek. To deny the words that He placed in each verse is to deny Him.

In Closing, "eis" does not put the cart before the horse, and no one would have ever said that "eis" could, if it weren't for Acts 2:38. One text. One text that contains a truth that certain men do not favor. These men teach salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. Now any Bible believer knows that salvation would not be possible if it weren't for the grace of God sending us His son. But friends, it takes true faith to believe the word of God. The same proponents of a "faith only" salvation, do not have enough faith in God to accept His word as fact. One can say the word "grace" and "faith" 700 times a day, but if they have not faith in what God said, only in the words they put in His mouth, then such have not the faith of the bible (Romans 10:17). Such faith can only be found among those who trust His word as pure, every word, every detail, and have surrendered themselves to it.

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# Envy

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Whenever we hear or see clamor, hatred, false witness, mischief, murder, slander, treachery, contradiction, blaspheming, et cetera against the works and/or person of some, then we begin to think why that should be happening; because the real motive(s) behind all this at the time may be unknown to us. And people say, "There is no smoke without fire." The unpleasant side of it is that, some of these and other carnal behaviors are found even in the church, despite exhortations, warnings, and commands against them - Matthew 15:18-19; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-4; Romans 13:13; Galatians 5.19-21; Ephesians 4.31; Titus 3.2; 1 Peter 2:1; etc.

A cause of these heartaches, at times, is envy. James truthfully says on this, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16). But because envy spreads gradually and may be unnoticed, the righteous at times gets infected by it (Psalms 73:3; 37:1; Proverbs 24:1,19).

And for the mere fact that envy may be unnoticed, any one practicing the sin of envy or jealousy may find it difficult to see himself having being caught in the web of such an evil and work of the flesh. Reading even the deeds of some people in some passages of the Scriptures, one may not fully understand the rationale for such acts. Believing too, that there are people in and out of the church (as there were in Bible times) who through their words or deeds display envy, but may not want to admit they also are guilty of the sin, I have sat down and gleaned from the word of God some of those things that envy may propel one to do and have also decided to place it in the hands of both the Christians and non-Christians that they may know and try to avoid them and also to not allow themselves to be used as an instrument for any one's enviousness, just as Jonathan, Saul's son, did not allow himself to be used for his father's envious deeds against David, the envied one.

While the above form part of the motives behind this effort, the main reason remains God's salvation and the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4; see Ezekiel 18:23. I therefore pray that God will help that this write-up will illumine as many as are guilty of the sin of envy to come out of it and be saved and to help others from being trapped by the sin, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Discussion

Many, many years ago, David in Psalm 106:16-17 said, "They envied Moses...and Aaron the saint of the LORD..." See Numbers 12:2; 16:1-3 to understand what really happened that David referred to as envy. Were it not God that revealed this to us through David by His Spirit, that the men's words were out of envy, we wouldn't have understood it that way. Since envy caused these men to do this, is this all that envy could lead men to do? How could we know more of other acts that this deadly sin might move people to do? Is there any antidote to envy? What then if the antidote is rejected? The discussion below gives us answers to these questions. But before we proceed, let us define "envy."

## Definition of Envy

Envy in Greek is "Phthonos," and it "is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantages or prosperity of others" (W.E.Vine). "The feeling of wanting to be in the situation as somebody else" (**OALD**). "The feeling of wanting something that somebody else has" (ibid). "A feeling of resentment and jealousy toward others because of their possessions or good qualities." (**Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary**, New and Enhanced Edition. 360).

(\* The KJV of the Bible is used in this study unless otherwise indicated.)

## Examples

Following are some other ways envy might provoke the envious to act. Please enjoy the reading and study.

1. Envy might cause the envious man to stop the source of blessing (water) of the envied one (Genesis

26:14-15). The envious man today may stop the source(s) of blessing of the envied one using craftiness or prying.

2. Envy might cause the envious man to ask the envied one to leave his territory because of the envied one's blessing (Genesis 26:16, see also verses 12,13).
3. Envy might cause the envious one to think death for the denial of the fruit of the womb (Genesis 30:1-2).
4. Envy might cause the envious man to hate the envied one (Genesis 37:4,5,11; Ezekiel 35:11).
5. Envy might cause the envious man to conspire to slay the envied one. And when talking of conspiracy, the envious are crafty, designing, expert, proficient, skillful, trained, tricky (Genesis 37:18-20, 26-33. Read Acts 4:15-18; 5:33 also).
6. Envy might cause the envious man to rebel against the envied one (Numbers 16:1-3).
7. Envy might cause the envious man to persuade the multitude to ask for the release of a murderer so as to destroy the envied one (Matthew 27:20-26; Mark 15:10-15, note verse 7c).
8. Envy might cause the envious man to come upon the envied, grieve at the efforts of the envied (Acts 4.1-2).
9. Envy might cause the envious man to want to know at all cost the source of power of the envied, because of what is done by the envied (Acts 4:7; cf. Matthew 21:23).
10. Envy might cause the envious man to examine or investigate the envied, when he notices the good done by the envied (Acts 4:9,16).
11. Envy might cause the envious man to threaten the envied (Acts 4:17).
12. Envy might cause the envious man to arrest and imprison the envied (Acts 4:3; 5:18, see verse 17).
13. At times, envy might cause the envious man to beat the envied (Acts 5:40b).
14. Envy might cause the envious man to restrain the envied on the performance of certain functions (Acts 4:18; 5:40).
15. At times, envy might cause the envious man to speak against, contradict and blaspheme the envied one's preaching (Acts 13:45).
16. At times, envy might propel the envious man to obey certain commands of the Lord (Philippians 1:15-16; see Matthew 28.19-20). This explains why the envied one often receives antagonism, contradiction, and blaspheming against his messages and/or actions (see Acts 13:45 again).
17. At times, envy might cause the envious man to set a place (it may even be a church) in an uproar using "some wicked fellow of the rabble (Acts 17:5, RSV).
18. At times, envy might cause the envious man to seek the hurt or destruction of the envied one through a hypocritical or pretentious kindness, or by another's hand (1 Samuel 18.17).
19. At times, envy might cause the envious man to ensnare the envied one (1 Samuel 18:21).
20. At times, envy might cause the envious man to order his servants (or "boys", SAA) to speak with the envied one secretly that the envious man has delight in him, and that the envious man's servants love him, too (1 Samuel 18:22).
21. At times, envy might cause the envious man to give (what seems) a difficult task to the envied just for his fall (1 Samuel 18:25. But read 1 Samuel 18:14b, 28a; 19:5).
22. Envy might cause the envious man to choose to continually become the envied one's enemy (1 Samuel 18:29b). This is evident in Saul's relationship with David as:
  - a. He spoke to his son and servants to kill the envied one (1 Samuel 19:1).
  - b. He made a pretentious promise not to kill the envied (1 Samuel 19:6, see verses 9,10).
  - c. He often sent messengers to the house of the envied to watch and slay him (1 Samuel 19:11, 14-16).
  - d. He grew angry with his son, Jonathan, because of his relationship with David, the envied one (1 Samuel 20:30-33). This is a clear indication that the envious man does not have the interest seeing others relating in any way or manner with the envied one. See verse 30c again.
  - e. He queried the priest that gave bread to David, the envied one (1 Samuel 22:11-13; see 21:3-6, 8-9. The envious man today may even employ the same tactics when he or they are aware of any blessing from any one (John 3.27; James 1.17).
  - f. He orders the slaying of all the priests of the LORD he assumes have conspired against him with David, the envied one (see verses 13, 16-19).
  - g. He said, "God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars" (1 Samuel 23:7).
  - h. He "called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men"

(1 Samuel 23:8).

i. He secretly practiced mischief against the envied (verse 9).

j. He sought the envied everyday (1 Samuel 23:14c).

k. The envious man asked his informants (verses 19-20) to:

(i) "investigate and see his place" (1 Samuel 23:22, **IKJV (Dickson Teacher's Bible)**).

(ii) "see....and take knowledge of all the lurking places where" the envied "hides himself" (verse 23, [ibid]).

l. The envious man blessed his informants for giving him information about the envied (1 Samuel 23:19-21; note verse 21).

m. The envious man sought feedback from his informants concerning the envied (verse 23b).

23. Wherever the envied one might go or relocate, envy might cause the envious man to seek and search him out on information from the envious man's informants (1 Samuel 23:19-20, 22-26; 24:1-2. See also chapter 26.1-3; note verse 18. Read Psalm 56:6c).

24. Envy might cause the envious man to seek the preservation of his seed and name by the envied, by asking the envied to "swear....by the LORD" (1 Samuel 24:21. So, if any one out of envy does this today, it is not a new thing (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10).

More evils that envy might move the envious man to do are understood by:

1. The envious man's pursuance of the envied one to his hiding again, after that the envious man's informants told him about the envied one (1 Samuel 26:1-4. See verse 18).

2. The envious man's searches for the envied one as one "come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains" (1 Samuel 26:20b &c). This is highly ridiculous!

Since envy is capable of making people behave in the above ways, one must agree with Solomon's declaration that, "Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" (Proverbs 27.4). Some commentators' comments on Proverbs 27.4 are these:

*"Wrath (is) cruel (cruelty itself), and anger (is) outrageous (overflowing, like a torrent, unexpectedly, overwhelmingly, powerfully, and dangerously, Nah 1.8); but who (is) able to stand before envy? - or jealousy (Prov 6:34-35). So the Chaldaic. The angry man avows his anger; the envious or jealous craftily hides it until he gets his opportunity. The angry may possibly be appeased in course of time; the envious or jealous becomes only more exasperated. Envy or jealousy penetrates more deeply, creeps slowly, and cannot be eradicated (Gejer). (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown; PC Study Bible 5).*

*"...Fleischer generalizes this idea: 'enmity proceeding from hatred, envy, or jealousy, it is difficult or altogether impossible to withstand, since it puts into operation all means, both secretly and openly, to injure the enemy.'..." (Keil and Delitzsch. ibid).*

*"...Wrath (it is true) is cruel, and does many a barbarous thing, and anger is outrageous; but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, are much more mischievous. One may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul's javelin, but when it grows, as Saul's did, to a settled envy, there is no standing before it; it will pursue; it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another will be still contriving to do him hurt, and will keep his anger for ever" (Matthew Henry. ibid).*

But, I ask, **Children of God, should this be?** The Bible says, **No!** (Romans 13:13; Ephesians 4:20-32; James 3:10b).

#### **Antidote**

Is there any antidote to envy? Yes! There is no problem without solution. The antidote to emend or counteract envy is love. Whether the problem (sin) of envy is personal or impersonal, let me borrow some words from Brother Nelson M. Smith, "**Love is the answer**" (Smith, Nelson M., **What Is This Thing Called LOVE?.41**).

1. "Love does not envy" (1 Corinthians 13:4; **ESV**; see Romans 13:13; 1 Peter 3:8; 4:8).

2. Pray earnestly to God to help you out of the sin (Matthew 26:41; John 14:13-14; 1 John 5:14-15; cf.

James 5:13-18).

If impersonal, that is, the sin is troubling others. This may be hard to ascertain by man, but not with “the word of God” (Hebrews 4:12-13)), still show love by:

1. teaching “truth” (John 17:17; Ephesians 4:15) on the sin of envy (2 Timothy 4:2-4; 3:16-17; Titus 2:1; Isaiah 49:2. Read Galatians 5:19-21).
2. praying earnestly to God to help the person(s) out of the sin (John 14:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 John 5:14-15; cf. James 5:13-18. You may read Luke 2:37).

### **What Then If the Antidote Is Rejected?**

If the antidote to the sin of envy is rejected,

1. There will continue to be “confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16) wherever the sin is available.
2. The guilty will ultimately be paid “the wages of sin” which is “death” (Romans 6:23; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8).

### **Conclusion**

Some of the ways envy might cause people to act have been highlighted in this simple effort as seen in the Scriptures. If you are a Christian and

*“ye have bitter envying.....in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”* (James 3:14-16; See verse 16 as also quoted by **The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary Of The English Language**).

“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:22-23).

If you are an unbeliever and are also guilty of envy, yea! “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a; Revelation 21:8; cf. Galatians 5:19-21). But rejoice! There is a precious gift of God for you! This gift is “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23b; see John 3:16-18, 36). This gift will be freely given to you if you: hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), believe it (John 8:24, 31; Mark 1:15), repent of your sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10), and you are baptized in Jesus’ name for the forgiveness of your sins (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:37-38). Then, the Lord Jesus will add you to his nondenominational church (Acts 2:47; Romans 16:16-18).

God bless you as you meditate on this write-up. Amen.

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## **Divine Election**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Calvinism was once the dominate theology of Protestant denominationalism. It is less popular today, but many still believe it, and even those Protestants who do not believe all of Calvinism have been influenced by it. In fact, many Christians are unwittingly influenced by Calvinism. One of the basic tenets of Calvinism is “Unconditional Election.”

*The doctrine of unconditional election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and only these, He purposed to save* (**The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented**, David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas. 30).

Calvinists read passages that teach divine predestination and **assume** they refer to the predestination of

certain individuals.

**I affirm that the Scriptures teach that salvation is available to all mankind without exception or limitation.** The Bible, the Word of God, teaches that it is God's will that every individual lost sinner receive eternal life in heaven and that the Father has done everything possible, in harmony with His nature and ours, to effect the salvation of every lost sinner. There is no hidden divine decree which limits the actual possibility of salvation to divinely predestined individuals.

### **What Are the Issues?**

False issues must not be created, for they only obscure real differences. I believe in the sovereignty of God as strongly as did John Calvin (Acts 17:24; Daniel 4:35). I defend the absolute right of God to do what He wills with His creatures as stoutly as any Calvinist (Romans 9:20-21). I firmly believe in salvation by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10), and that, in our salvation, all glory is to God (Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:3-6,11-12). The issues in principle are threefold: the justice of God (Ezekiel 18:25), the impartiality of God (Romans 2:11), and the universal love of God (John 3:16; Ezekiel 18:32).

Certain truths held by all Bible believers are irrelevant. God's plan is eternal (2 Timothy 1:9) and unchangeable (Numbers 23:19). It includes the future acts of men (John 6:64) as well as chance happenings (Proverbs 16:33). Some events are fixed or inevitably certain (Luke 22:22). Even sinful acts of men are included in the plan and are overruled for good (Genesis 50:20).

The questions are:

1. **Does God predestine the salvation or condemnation of individuals, doing so with no consideration of their belief or unbelief, obedience or disobedience, righteous, godly character or unrighteous, ungodly character?**
2. **Does God predestine the moral choices every individual makes?**

### **Biblical Predestination**

God did "predestinate" certain things (Ephesians 1:3-11). He has an "elect" (1 Peter 1:2), His "chosen" (1 Peter 2:9). The predestination of the Bible involves an elect **group** (the church) of saved to which **all** may be added **conditioned upon** their faith in and obedience to the Gospel. Election to eternal salvation is only as we are in union with Christ (Ephesians 1:3-6; "in Christ" [verse 3], "in Him"[verse 4], "by Jesus Christ" [verse 5], "in the Beloved" [verse 6]). All who by faith are baptized into Christ Jesus are God's children of promise (Galatians 3:26-29). God determined in eternity before time that salvation would be in Christ and that all those who trusted Him would be saved in Him.

### **Proof of Position**

#### **The Love of God**

God's love that makes salvation possible is for the whole world (John 3:14-17). Certainly the term "world" is often used in a limited sense, but when so used it denotes the wicked in contrast with the elect (John 12:31; 15:19). Surely no one will contend that God's saving love is for the wicked but not for the elect.

#### **The Impartiality of God**

The Scriptures clearly affirm that, in salvation, God is impartial.

*Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'*  
(Acts 10:34-35)

"For there is no partiality with God." (Romans 2:11; cf. Romans 10:13; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:23-25; 1 Peter 1:17-19). He could save none or save all and remain impartial. But if He is to save some and not others, to be impartial, He must sincerely offer salvation to all, without exception or limitation, and on the

same conditions.

### **The Will of God**

God wills that all people everywhere be saved. He wills to show mercy to as many as are disobedient (Romans 11:32).

He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4) The term “desires” is translated “will have” in the **King James Version**, “would have” in the **American Standard Version**, and “wants” in the **International Standard Version**. It is the same Greek word, “thelo,” translated “willing” in Matthew 8:2-3:

*And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

It is also found as “will” in Matthew 26:39: “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” This is also the case in John 5:21: “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.” It is rendered “God willing” in Acts 18:21. In Romans 9:18 it is twice translated “wills” in reference to God. (See also 1 Corinthians 4:19; Philippians 2:13; James 4:15.) The word denotes the divine will. In context, “all” of 1 Timothy 2:3-4 refers to everyone lost, whether elect or condemned (verses 1-2). It is the divine will that all the lost, “without exception or limitation,” be saved.

He is potentially the Savior of “all” (1 Timothy 4:10). In this passage, the “all” is a greater group than “those who believe.”

The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). If “all” means all the elect, then all the elect need to “come to repentance,” including those who are already saved.

“All” is as universal as physical death which came through Adam and the physical resurrection which shall come through Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22; cf. John 5:28-29). Calvinists certainly have no trouble understanding the unlimited scope of “all” when the apostle teaches that “all” sin (Romans 3:9-18, 23).

### **The Grace of God**

God’s saving grace is for “all” (Titus 2:11-12). The “all” of this context includes opponents of the doctrine of Christ (verse 8). The result of the grace of the passage is that God “might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people...” (verse 14), i.e., His elect.

### **Salvation in Christ**

Salvation in Christ is for the “world” (John 3:14-17; 6:33; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19), for “all peoples” (John 12:32; Colossians 1:19-20). Remember, if “world” is limited, it means sinners.

### **The Invitation of Christ**

The invitation of Christ is sincerely universal (Isaiah 45:22). It is for “all you who labor and are heavy laden...” (Matthew 11:28-30). He calls anyone who “thirsts” (John 7:37), whoever “desires” (“will”, **KJV**; Revelation 22:17). There is nothing in the context of any of these verses to limit the “all.” Surely, a loving Savior, “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22), would not invite those whom His Father has already predestined to eternal hell, knowing full well they cannot come.

### **The Gospel**

The Gospel, the power of God to save (Romans 1:16) is to “all the world” (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16-17). If the gospel is the divine power to save, and, as Calvinists admit, it “is available to all mankind without exception or limitation,” then “salvation is available to all mankind without exception or



limitation.”

### Command to Repent

God “now commands all men everywhere to repent”(Acts 17:30). How could Paul have made his language more universal? The “all” of this passage is the “world” Christ will judge (verse 31). That certainly includes the lost. God does not command us to do what we cannot do (Matthew 25:14-30). Thus, “all mankind without exception or limitation” should and can repent.

### Conclusion

Glory be to the Father and thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ, God loves all people without exception or limitation, He is completely impartial in granting salvation, He wills that all people be saved, His saving grace is for all, salvation in Christ is freely offered to all, Jesus sincerely invites all sinners to come and be saved, the gospel, “God’s power to save,” is for all, and the command to repent is directed to all. You need not fear that a secret decree made in the mists of a prior eternity forever exclude you or your loved ones from the joy of salvation, for **the Scriptures teach that salvation is available to all mankind without exception or limitation.**



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