

November 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.

Question from Nigeria about Death

Question

Is death related to the coming of Christ? After death, where is the spirit before the judgement day? According to 1Thessalonian 4:16-17, the dead in Christ shall rise... Is the spirit buried with the body?

Answer

At Jesus' return death will be no more (1 Corinthians 15:22-26; Revelation 20:14). When we die, the body decays but the spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7; Matthew 10:28). The souls of the righteous enter paradise, whereas the souls of the lost go to torment (Luke 16:19-23; 23:39-43). In the resurrection the body is raised and reunited with the spirit (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; Luke 8:55).

What Kind of Church Do You Want?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

In our lovely, little community we have a church dedicated to being brand new. We have another that exists for cowboys - and wanna be cowboys. All the major brands of human tradition are represented - with their sectarian names identifying each tradition. We have the older models, imported from Europe, and the newer, made in America brands. Surely you ought to find one that pleases you. But doesn't that miss the whole point of being religious? Are we seeking to please ourselves or God? "For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ"

(Galatians 1:10). If the Son of God always pleased His Father and did His will rather than pleasing Himself and following His own desires (John 8:29), even though it meant going to the cross (Matthew 26:39,42,44), should we be seeking to please ourselves or our Father? Are you happy with your church? But is God? May I humbly suggest that you should look for a church that is determined to please God regardless of whether or not men are pleased? Shouldn't the question be What kind of church does God want?

Bare Minimum

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

What's the least we can do for the Lord and still go to heaven? No one actually asks that question out loud, but it is the life-defining philosophy of more than a few Christians. "What's the least number of services I can attend without getting in trouble?" "What's the least amount I can share and still look generous?" "What's the bare minimum expected of me in reading the Bible, showing hospitality, or talking to others about their soul?"

The person who walks with God has a different philosophy: "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded us to do" (Exodus 36:5). They are not interested in keeping the best of life for themselves and giving God the crumbs that remain. They don't live for pleasure every day then have a headache at church time. That is tantamount to spiritual suicide to the true follower of God. He loves God with all of his heart and will not offer to the Lord "that which costs me nothing" (1 Chronicles 21:24). He is more interested in giving God what is right instead of what is left.

Honestly, how do we view our earthly life? Whose will consumes us each day: God's or our own? How do we approach worship: "I have to go" or "I can't wait to go"? How do we respond to those who need our help: "Let someone else do it" or "God has given me these resources to use to His glory"? How important is spiritual thinking to us: "That's the preacher's job" or "I'm scared to take one step without God"?

If we are so self-centered that we are looking for the least we can do and still be considered a Christian, we might as well keep it all to ourselves because we already have our reward. That is the principle Jesus taught in relation to those who perform godliness for earthly advantages, yet have no true love for God. "For they love to pray...that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward" (Matthew 6:5). How is that not the same for Christians who do the least they can without losing the approval of others? They won't go a day without work, shopping, games, or going out to eat, but are "too ill" at service times. Do they not already have their reward in the activities they pursue apart from God? Is their gain from Christianity not already found in attending just enough to avoid public withdrawal?

The Bible teaches us to give our finest to God. He knows the difference between what we are able to give and what we are trying to get by with. He knows! (See Malachi 1:13.) So we might as well put away the charade of godliness just to keep people from condemning us. Will the earthly object (idol) we place before God save us in the Day of Judgment? Will it prepare us to give account for "the things done in the body...whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10)? Then let us stop lying to ourselves in thinking we can be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God and still go to heaven. Jesus is too smart for that. He says, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). That verse is just as true today as it was when Jesus spoke it. If we truly love God we will present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1).

The Church and Christian Individual

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Nigeria

This subject has occasioned a lot of confusion and misunderstanding. On the one hand, there are those who contend that what the individual Christian can do as regards the Lord's work, the church as a collective body can do. On the other hand, some argue that what the church cannot do, the individual

Christian cannot do.

Both are hinged on the notion, albeit erroneous, that what the Christian individual is doing, the church is doing and vice-versa. One of the offshoots of a failure to distinguish between the church and Christian individual is the bastardization of the high and holy mission of the church by activating it in areas God did not authorize it to function as a body.

Christian Life Is All-Embracing

Christianity, as brother Roy Cogdill has rightly put it “is a way of life embracing every relationship in the life of the Christian individual ... and nothing in the life of the individual Christian is exempt from it” (Roy Cogdill, **Walking By Faith**, pages 29-30).

In the social realm, for instance, a Christian lives and interacts with unbelievers to “rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15). He can even attend a feast organized by an unbeliever. “If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake” (1 Corinthians 10:27). It is understood that Christians are addressed here in their individual capacities. What is, if we may ask, the business of the church as a collective body in attending feasts arranged by unbelievers if what the Christian individual does amounts to the church’s collective action?

Moreover, a Christian as an individual is subject to the government – any type of government under which he lives (Romans 13:1-7). Now, is the church subservient to the government or the government subject to the church? This is the thrust of the “keep the church and the state separate” campaign. A Christian sustains an integral relationship to the government as well as to the church. He votes and is voted for as an individual. The church does not vote, neither is it voted for. What is true of the Christian individual viz-a-viz his social relationship is equally true of his family and economic relationships.

As an individual, a Christian has the obligation of bringing up his children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). The church has no business in rearing our children for us. It has a far greater duty than that. Economically, a Christian should labor, “working with his hands the thing which is good that he may have to give to him that needed” (Ephesians 4:28). He must do his “own business and to work with your own hands ... that you may have lack of nothing” (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). This charge finds expression in Christians as individuals. The church has no such obligation. It should, therefore, not be enmeshed in a secular business venture. Indeed, the church as a collective body has no business in business.

Distinguishing Between the Individual Christian and the Church In Action

It should be obvious to everyone that church action involves a group of individuals Christians acting collectively. Any sort of work the church as a collective body does is done through “that which every joint supplies” (Ephesians 4:16). However, while this is true, it does not necessarily follow that the church is authorized to do everything the individual Christian does. It should be noted that the term “church” is a collective noun, just like the term “flock.” One sheep is not the whole flock, and one member is not the whole body. “For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body is Christ ... For the body is not one member but many” (1 Corinthians 12:12,14). Many individual members make up the church both in the local sense and in the universal sense.

An individual is just a stone in the spiritual house of God. He is not the whole building (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5). In order to show conclusively that individual action is not church action, ponder with us this fact: one individual Christian committed the sin of fornication in Corinth. Did Paul charge the whole church with “such fornication as is not so much named among the Gentiles?” (1 Corinthians 5:1-13) On the other hand, this incestuous brother was commanded to be put away. How? “When ye are gathered together” (1

Corinthians 5: 4-5) The withdrawal of fellowship must be a collective action. No member or a clique within the local church has the right of administering discipline on another member.

This point is corroborated by the procedure laid down by the Lord in settling personal quarrels and misunderstandings. There is individual action and there is church action. What is the individual action? "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ... But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more ..." (Matthew 18:1-16). If what an individual is doing is what the church is doing, then the offended party must already be telling the church when he takes with him "one or two more." But sound reasoning dictates to us that two or three (including the person that is offended) are still acting within the ambit of individual responsibility when they reason with the offender. When or where does the church action begin? "And if he shall refuse to hear them, tell it to the church, but if he refuses to hear the church ... " (Matthew 18:17). In view of this, therefore, we assert that there is a difference between the individual Christian and the church in action.

That there is a distinction between individual action and collective action can be demonstrated further in 1 Timothy 5:16. "If any man or woman that believeth has widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed." How would this passage of Scripture make any sense if, as some argue, there is no distinction between individual action and the church's action? The import of that passage is that there is a kind of benevolence that is chargeable to the Christian individual and that which the church as a collective body should not be bothered with.

Distinction Between the Responsibilities of Individuals and the Church In the Area of Benevolence

Sometimes emotions are worked up and allowed to take the place of sound biblical reasoning in this area of our discussion. Let it be said loud and clear that as individual Christians, we are obligated to help anyone who is in need to the best of our ability. This is the focus of Christ's teaching on "Who is my neighbor?" in Luke 10:25-37. In this connection, it is apposite to recall that judgment will be on individuals. It will not be a question of what did the church (as a collective body) do or not do. Rather, it will be a question of whether you or I did feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick etc. (Matthew 25:31-46; See also Galatians 6:10; James 1:27). The earlier we realize this, the better: so that we might not delude ourselves into believing that we could be saved by the efforts of others.

As individuals, we have a responsibility to "learn first to show piety at home and to requite [our] parents ... let them relieve them and let not the church be charged that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (1 Timothy 5:4, 16). Brother Robert Harkrider spoke our mind when he said, "if every time an individual does a thing, it is the church at work, how would it be possible for the individual in this text to keep the church from being charged?" (Robert Harkrider, **First Principle of Christianity**, page 40).

When it comes to church action in the area of benevolence, the New Testament reveals that a local church has the obligation of relieving the needs of its own members. That is the thrust of Acts 4:32-35; 6:1-4. In the case of those who are "widows indeed" and have attained certain qualifications, these should be charged to the church (1 Timothy 5:5-16). Nothing stops those who are so relieved to pass on to their unbelieving friends and neighbors "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). But they do so in their individual capacity.

We also see that one local church could send to the relief of several churches as the church at Antioch did "send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea" (Acts 11:27-30). Again, it is palpably evident that it was meant for the brethren, that is, the Christians. Moreover, there is evidence that several churches sent to the relief of one church. This is evidenced in Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, 13-14. Each of the churches sent to the needy church, that is, Jerusalem and the relief was meant for the saints there.

In conclusion, space will not permit a lengthier discussion of this subject. Let us be impressed with the

fact that the New Testament distinguishes between the church and the individual. It should be at the back of our minds that the Lord places more responsibilities upon us as individuals so that the church as a collective body may be committed to the spiritual work of saving of souls. Do not let us bastardize the mission of the church by charging it with responsibilities that could be met by us as individuals. Let the church fulfill its role as “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Living on Borrowed Time

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten, Or even by reason of strength fourscore years; Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; For it is soon gone, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). Having reached that milestone of threescore and ten a few years ago. I feel that it is by the grace of God, the skill of doctors, and a wife who looks after my health that I am still in good health and among the living. At this stage of life, one has a different perspective on the past, and on what lies ahead. In a sense, those who are living past a certain age are living on “borrowed time.”

We have all borrowed things from others from time to time. We may borrow some clothes for a special occasion, or borrow some dinnerware if we are having a crowd over for dinner. And there are times when we might borrow someone’s car when ours is sick or dead. When we borrow things, we generally take extra care of them, knowing they are not ours, and we will have to give an account if we damage the things borrowed.

How do we regard our borrowed time? In truth, all of our time is borrowed, as we owe our time to the Lord, whether we are young or old. This is particularly true of those who are Christians, because we have been bought with the blood of Christ, and we belong to God. “Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Paul evidently considered that everything he was and had belonged to the Lord. “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.”

In view of the brevity and uncertainty of life, we are admonished to be “making the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

In my search of the Scriptures, I have not found the passage that speaks of the Christian’s “retirement years,” other than the heavenly rest. I have seen too many older saints who “take life easy,” because they have already done their duty. When I see someone like that, I suspect that they have been taking things pretty easy all along the way, for one who is fervently serving the Lord in youth is not apt to let the fires cool when they are older. Because of persecutions and hardships, evidently Jeremiah had determined not to prophesy any longer, but found he could not contain himself. “And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain” (Jeremiah 20:9).

What can older Christians do, who often have spare time on their hands? Consider a few suggestions. (1) They can encourage those who are younger, who may be struggling. A few words of encouragement or wise counsel can do wonders. (2) They can work with Bible Correspondence Courses. Some are doing this on-line, as well as through the mail. (3) They can teach the gospel. I have known more than one elderly saint who was teaching others, even into their 90s. (4) You can write letters of encouragement to those who are preaching the gospel in other places, especially those whom the church where you attend are supporting. (5) You can teach skills to those who are younger, as mentioned in Titus 2:4-5. (6) Visit or call those who were absent from the assembly. (7) Perhaps by reason of infirmity, many of these things are beyond your ability, but there is still an effective work you can do—pray for others. “The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working” (Eph 5:16).

If you are living on borrowed time, use it carefully, so that you can give it back in good shape.

Light In The Lord | Ephesians 5:8-10

Patrick Farish | Wauxahatchie, Texas, USA

"...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true) and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord."

Having urged the Ephesians to "not become partners" with those he identifies as "darkness," he urges them, as "light in the Lord," to walk as children of light. There are different descriptions of the walk of a Christian – as, "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (4:10). Now, we will look at the task – indeed, the requirement -- of discernment.

To "discern" is to determine a conclusion from available facts. Sometimes new converts to the study of the Bible, or people like those in Hebrews 5:12-13 want to know where some activity, or practice, is authorized, or prohibited – "where does it say have a church building?" --- or, "where does it say, don't gamble; or, don't drink booze; or, don't eat the Lord's supper on Thursday?"

As far as a "church building" is concerned, a requirement to assemble (Hebrews 10:25) necessitates a **place** – whether it be a building built for that purpose, or someone's home. Whatever is most advantageous to those involved is authorized; not named, but discerned as authorized. God said have a place to assemble when He said assemble.

Another wants to know, where does it say "don't gamble?" Gambling involves putting something of value at risk in a game of chance, for the purpose of taking the valuables of another. Several passages have good application here – but we cite just one, in Matthew 7:12, "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets." What does the gambler wish that others would do to him? Then, that's the thing he should do to them. The word "gambler" is not there – but the principle is, easily discerned by the student.

Then, drinking intoxicants – does the Bible say, "don't"? Well, not in so many words; but the requirement to not "get drunk with wine" comes close to being an outright prohibition. The one who would not be drunken – cannot be drunken, without taking the first drink!

Finally, the Lord's Supper on Thursday – or Friday, or whenever. The first day of the week, the Lord's day, is prominent in the New Testament. It was the day of the resurrection of Jesus (John 20:1), of Eutychus (Acts 20:7-9), the day designated for contribution by the saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and the Lord's Day, the day John was charged to write (Revelation 1:10-11).

In none of those passages, however, is the first day of the week, the Lord's day, named as the day of eating the Lord's Supper. So maybe Thursday is alright, hmmm? No, the only time the Lord's Supper is associated with any specific day, is in Acts 20:7, 11, "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight ... And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed."

The first day of the week was the day when the early Christians gathered to eat the Lord's Supper, and that is what they did. They did this in the company of an apostle, and evidently this was the apostolic practice. Verse seven records their eating the Lord's Supper – "we were gathered to break bread." In verse eleven Paul "had broken bread and eaten," in preparation for traveling on foot. They all ate the Lord's Supper; only Paul ate the common meal preparatory to his departure.

Well, does that exclude Thursday? Only the Lord's day is mentioned. Writing to the Corinthians Paul said "... that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written ..." (1 Corinthians 4:6). If we walk as "children of light," our lives will bear fruit that is good and right and true.

Did Paul Keep the Sabbath? | Acts 17:2

Ajayi S. Ojeva | Osogbo, Nigeria

Introduction

It is clearly stated in the New Testament that the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Paul gave order to churches in New Testament days to do a contribution on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Despite all these infallible evidences, some still insist on keeping the Sabbath. They cite Acts 17:2 as proof that Paul the apostle kept the Sabbath day, and claim if he did, we are under obligation to do same. Is it true that Paul kept the Sabbath? Act 17:2 reads, "and Paul, as his custom was went unto them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures" (**American Standard Version**). A closer look at this passage and others, where the activities of Paul on the Sabbath days are recorded in the scriptures will help any honest seeker of the truth to know that Paul did not keep the Sabbath.

The custom of Paul in this verse, as we shall see here and in other scriptures, was not keeping the Sabbath, but reasoning with the Jews. He was not keeping the Sabbath, but seizing the opportunity of the assembling with the Jews in the synagogues on the Sabbath days to preach Christ unto them (Acts 17:3; 13:38).

Shortly after his conversion, we read in Acts 9:20, "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the son of God". At Salamis in Acts 13:5 we read, "they preached in the synagogue of the Jews." In Acts 13:14, it is reported, "But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down." From the content of his preaching here in Acts 13, it is crystal clear that this assembly was not of the Christians, but of the Jews. In verse 16, he addressed the audience as "men of Israel." In verses 38-42, he preached unto them the forgiveness of sins obtainable through Jesus Christ (verse 38). He declared justification by Jesus Christ from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses (verse 39). In verses 45-47 it is evident the assembly was not of Christians, but of the Jews.

In our Text, we note first, that the synagogue was "a synagogue of the Jews" (verse 1). This is significant. The word, synagogue(s), is found fifty-five times in the New Testament. The adjectival phrase, "of the Jews," is found three times and only in Acts of the Apostles (13:41; 17:1, 10.) Why this identification? Prior to the day of Pentecost, the Jews practiced only one religion – Judaism. Thereafter Judaism and Christianity were two parallel religions to which a Jew might belong. So here, the phrase "synagogue of the Jews" clearly differentiated the assembly of the Jews from the assembly of the Christians. Compare Acts 20: 7, "when the disciples came together"; Acts 11: 26, "they were gathered together with the church." Also, verse 2 states clearly that Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. To who else does the pronoun "them" refer but the Jews?

In Acts 18 we read about the work of Paul in Corinth. In verse 4, we read that he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded the Jews and Greeks. We read in verse 5, he testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ, in verse 6, they opposed themselves and blasphemed. In verse 8, "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house.". Heretofore, he was not a Christian, but a Jewish worshiper. In verse 13, the Jews accuse Paul of "persuading men to worship God contrary to the law." If he had been a keeper of the Sabbath with the Jews, they would not have laid such charges against him.

Furthermore, in Acts 20: 6-7, we read about the visit of Paul to Troas. From the context, we know they got

to Troas on Monday and they abode there seven days. Apparently, they spent a Sabbath day there. The church did not come together on the Sabbath day, but waited until the first day of the week before assembling. Since Paul was in a hurry, for he "spoke to the people until midnight because he was leaving the next morning" **CEV**, if he was a keeper of the Sabbath day, he no doubt would have convened an assembly on the Sabbath day and departed on the first day of the week. But Luke emphatically stated, on the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread.

Conclusion

The assertion that Paul the apostle kept the Sabbath is false. Neither Paul nor the churches in the New Testament kept the Sabbath. The law which included Sabbath day keeping has been abrogated (2 Corinthians 3:6-17). Christians today, are not under the law. The Sabbath day is not the approved day of worship today. The first day of the week is the acceptable day of worship for Christians today.

A Response to "THE BIBLE VERSUS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST" (9)

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
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Water Baptism, Acts 22:16

Acts 22:16 reads, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

After quoting the text, Mr. Melton immediately states: "Revelation 1:5 plainly tells us that it is the BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST that washes away sin, not water baptism, so there is obviously more to Acts 22:16 than the Church of Christ teaches." To be clear, Revelation 1:5 says the Lord's blood washes away sin; it says nothing about baptism, either positive or negative. Melton's inference is that Acts 22:16 is somehow unclear or ambiguous. It is not. Acts 22:16 is as plain and easy to understand as Revelation 1:5. The problem is, Melton believes one, but does not believe the other.

So, what does he do? He maligns Ananias, the speaker in Acts 22. Using Acts 22:12, Melton identifies Ananias as "...a Jewish proselyte who still followed the Old Testament law..." who "...did not yet have full understanding of Salvation by Grace." He continues, "Ananias associated water baptism with the Old Testament laws of PURIFICATION ... He didn't have a clear understanding of the Blood Atonement of Christ, which washes away all sin."

Consider a few things:

1. Acts 22 does not, nor does any other text identify Ananias as a Jewish proselyte. Melton just made that up. Acts 9:10 identifies Ananias as "...a certain disciple at Damascus."
2. The Lord spoke to and commissioned Ananias to speak to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:10-18). Did Jesus choose to send someone who would fail to teach the truth of the gospel?
3. Melton's accusation against Ananias is the same as his accusation against Peter in Acts 2:38, he "...did not yet have a full understanding of Salvation by Grace." And yet, Peter, many years after Acts 2:38 was still teaching the necessity of water baptism (1 Peter 3:21).
4. When falsehood is found among God's people in the New Testament, it is corrected. In Acts 8, Simon's attempt to buy the ability to impart the gifts of the Spirit was rebuked. In Acts 15, the Judaizing teachers who sought to bind the Law on the Gentiles were confronted and refuted. In Acts

18, Apollos who taught the baptism of John was pulled aside and instructed. In Acts 19, those who had received John's baptism (through the false teaching of Apollos) were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. In Galatians 2, Peter's withdrawal from the Gentile brethren when Jewish brethren came to Antioch was withstood and rebuked. If Peter was teaching error in Acts 2:38 and Ananias was teaching error in Acts 22:16, as Melton suggests, why was their falsehood not corrected?

5. There is nothing in Acts 22:16 indicating Ananias associated water baptism with the Old Testament laws of purification. That is Mr. Melton's attempt at explaining away the text.

Let's come back to Acts 22:16 and notice what Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus.

And now why are you waiting? There is a sense of urgency which is consistently found when folks in the New Testament were taught about baptism. In Acts 2, three thousand people responded and were baptized that day (v 41). In Acts 8, as he taught Jesus to the Eunuch (v 35), Philip mentioned baptism, and the Eunuch, upon seeing water sought to be baptized right away (v 36-39). In Acts 9, the primary account of Saul's conversion, the soon to be apostle "...received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized" (v 18). In Acts 10, Cornelius and those who were gathered with him were commanded to be baptized (v 47-48; cf. 6). In Acts 16, Lydia's heart was opened to heed the things spoken by Paul, which resulted in her and her household being baptized (v 14-15). Also in Acts 16, having heard about Jesus Christ, the Philippian jailer and his family were baptized immediately (v 33). This sense of urgency we see in the New Testament is a stark contrast to the *put it off attitude* that is prevalent in so many churches today. Why the difference? The people in the first century were being taught that baptism was essential for salvation, therefore they responded immediately. Today, people are being taught a different gospel (Galatians 1:6-8).

Arise and be baptized. He wasn't told to accept Jesus into his heart. he wasn't told to say a sinner's prayer. he was told to arise and be baptized. Will we listen to what the Bible says or to manmade doctrines?

And wash away your sins. What was the purpose of baptism? He was told being baptized would wash away his sins. Melton calls that baptismal regeneration and rejects it, despite the fact that it is written in his Bible! Instead of outright rejecting what is recorded in Scripture, it might be better to look at the big picture; to see how the blood of Christ and baptism work together. We'll do so below.

Calling on the name of the Lord. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Calling on the name of the Lord is more than a vocal cry, prayer or appeal. Ananias reveals that it involves obedience to God's word. In particular, he applies it to the command to be baptized.

Mr. Melton brought up Revelation 1:5, which says Jesus "...washed us from our sins in His own blood..." Melton sought to set this text against Acts 22:16, and to discount the words of Ananias in the process. What a dishonest way to use the Bible! Notice, the apostle John didn't say how our sins are washed away by the blood of Christ, just that they are. If we seek to interpret Scripture with Scripture, we can easily come to an understanding of how this takes place. And to Mr. Melton's displeasure, Acts 22:16 is part of the solution.

Revelation 1:5 and Acts 22:16 are complimentary texts, just like Matthew 26:28 and Acts 2:38. We have noted that Jesus' blood was shed for (unto) the remission of sins, and we are also baptized for (unto) the remission of sins. Matthew 26 reveals what the Lord did for us, Acts 2 reveals how we gain access to it. In the same way, Revelation 1:5 reveals what has been done for us, and Acts 22:16 reveals how we gain access to it.

Hebrews 10:19-22 speaks about the blood of Christ, by which we have "boldness to enter the Holiest." But how has this happened? The writer says we had "...our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience..." In Hebrews 9, the author spoke of the sprinkling of blood upon the altar, the furnishings, the book, and the people to establish the Old Covenant. We need the blood of Christ sprinkled upon us. But we cannot have

His blood literally sprinkled upon us; it is a figure. So, how does it take place? The writer continues, "...and our bodies washed with pure water." What else could this be but a reference to baptism? Melton may like us to think the Hebrew author was referring to an Old Testament purification, but the context simply does not allow such. We are given entrance to the Holiest by the blood of Jesus when His blood is applied to our hearts, cleansing us of evil; and that takes place when we are baptized.

Baptism Does Not...

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

The Bible has much to say on the subject of baptism. The Book of God tells us that baptism is for remission of sin (Acts 2:38), that it saves us (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21), it puts us into Christ where all spiritual blessings are (Romans 6:3; Ephesians 1:3); through this act we can become the children of God (Galatians 3:26-28); it is to be preceded by faith, repentance and confession of our faith that Jesus is Lord (Acts 8:36-37; 2:38); and the mode of baptism is immersion (Acts 8:38; Romans 6:4).

It seems the vast majority of the religious world rejects the idea that baptism has anything to do with the forgiveness of sin. As noted above, their claim is totally false. Yet we have some brethren who take the Bible teaching on baptism to the other extreme, thinking that it is a kind of cure all problem with regard to sin, without ever repenting. This teaching is erroneous as well!

One cannot continue to practice sin after he has been baptized into Christ. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said,:

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

They had been guilty of all these things, but no longer did they practice them ("such were some of you"). Now they had been washed in the blood of Lamb (Acts 22:16), set apart by their obedience to the word of God now to be used in His service (John 17:17), and declared just in His sight (Romans 5:1-2).

Baptism does not make unlawful marriage lawful. If it was an adulterous relationship before baptism, it is still an adulterous relationship after baptism. One who was involved in homosexuality before baptism cannot continue to practice such after baptism. Baptism washes away the sins that had been committed upon one's repentance. When men and women were told to repent before baptism, it meant they had to turn from sin to God and they were not to continue in them.

To say that one is not subject to the law of Christ before baptism is to teach something that the Lord's will did not reveal. How did the Corinthians become guilty of fornication, adultery, etc. if they were not subject to that law? How would one become a sinner in need of salvation if he has not violated the law of God? In writing to those at Thessalonica, Paul said, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Will He take vengeance on those who have not submitted to the gospel of Jesus Christ? He said so! Does this not indicate that those who fail to obey are subject to that gospel? Sure, it does.

Likewise, just because one has been baptized does not guarantee that heaven will be that person's home. I don't personally know of anyone who is a member of the Lord's church that believes in the doctrine of once saved always saved. Yet I know several who live as if they believe such to be the truth. Baptism does not automatically punch your ticket to God's eternal abode. It takes faithful living on the part of each individual. Jesus said, "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Notice a similar statement made in Revelation 2:10, the later part of that

verse, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Baptism does not solve all the problems associated with sin in one's life. You may well need to repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins like those on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38). They turned away from their iniquities, like the Corinthians, and served God. Or you may have been baptized for the remission of your transgressions and you have allowed sin with its allurements to overtake you. You need to repent and pray like Peter told Simon. "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22). May we all be willing to submit to God's plan of forgiveness so that each might stand washed, sanctified, and justified in the sight of our Lord.

If There Is A God - Why Does He Let Bad Things Happen? (5)

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

Thus far in this series it has been pointed that the evil bad things that happen to us come from upheavals in nature, and human suffering. The recent hurricanes and earthquakes are demonstrations of suffering brought on by natural calamities which resulted in the loss of many lives and millions of dollars in the destruction of property. Examples of physical suffering by disease, sickness, and death are almost daily occurrences all around us. When evil things happen in either realm the tendency of many people is to blame God, saying He either lacks the power to stop such suffering, or if He has the power He lacks love for mankind, so he does nothing about it. It is unfair and unjust for us to charge our Creator with being the instigator of evil suffering, for He is Love, not evil. While He is in control and has both the power and the love to stop this evil, He has chosen not to do so at this present time. As pointed out previously, He allows humans to suffer these evil afflictions to discipline people to change bad behavior (Hebrews 12:8-12) or to test a person's faith to see if he really trusts Him (2 Timothy 3:12). He often allows humans to suffer from calamities and physical afflictions in life to bring about good later (Romans 8:18).

The existence of evil in our lives has nothing to do with God's power or His love. It has everything to do with man's choice to sin. No, the LORD is not the cause of human suffering. As has been emphasized over and over that dishonorable distinction belongs to the LORD's arch enemy, Satan. He is the one who introduced sin and rebellion into the world. He is the one who caused both mankind and the world to be cursed by the consequences of sin (Romans 8:20-22).

Jesus pointed this out in John 8:44, saying of the devil:

"...he was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

His lie to Adam and Eve in the Garden Paradise became the ultimate cause for human suffering (Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38). Paul later writes of this and says, "therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

But, beside the evil natural upheavals and calamities and evil physical human suffering by disease, sickness and death, there is third category of evil bad things that happen to mankind. This is what might be termed moral evil. This evil comes from an evil heart. Jesus taught this in Mark 7:20-23.

"...What comes out of man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, licentiousness, an evil eye, deceit, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

When hearts are evil, bad things happen.

The recent shootings and killings are definitely in this category. They are self-inflicted evil that started in the heart (mind) that controls one's life (Proverbs 4:23; 23:7). An evil heart causes people to choose to act foolishly with malice and hatred against fellow human beings. They allow their hate to lead them to violence, and this violence causes great pain, suffering and death to others. An evil heart filled with greed

causes men to steal and abuse people. Bad tempers and a lack of respect for their fellow man's life and property leads to fights, injury, property damage, spousal and child abuse, and suffering of other types. All of this and more from an evil heart.

Sometimes bad things happen to people when they or someone else chooses to violate the civil laws men have put into place to govern society. God ordained civil government for man to live under. While He is in control of everything He allows the governments (whatever kind they may be) to govern the people and make laws to maintain an orderly society (Romans 13:1-7). When people violate these laws, they have to suffer the penalty determined by the government for breaking the law. The penalty may be a fine and/or incarceration, maybe even death. Sometimes, the violation also causes death or injury to a person (DWI for example). The person not only suffers because of the violation, but the family may also suffer as a consequence, even though they are not guilty of the crime. Whatever the situation, God is not at fault for what happened. Yes, he allowed civil government to exist and to make laws. But, He didn't force the law-breaker to do what he did. He didn't force the person to break the law. He let man make the choice. We could use other examples of people suffering because they choose to violate the civil laws, but I believe you can understand what I am writing. When man violates the law, he is the one responsible for bringing the penalty upon himself. God is not to blame.

The basic cause of the bad things that happen when people commit moral evil, or have to suffer the consequences of someone else committing it, is because the evil hearts of mankind have chosen to reject God's way of righteousness and practice sinful things. They are making the wrong choices in life. Paul wrote of this in Romans 1:18-32. When men no longer acknowledge God and become unthankful, God allows them to do as they please, at least for the time being. He gives them up, or gives them over (verses 24, 26, 28) to practice their uncleanness and vile passions with debased minds to do those things which are not fitting. In other words, God lets them do as they please, bringing suffering to themselves and others, since they are bound and determined to live and practice their immoral, ungodly, and wicked sins. They enjoy sin for a season, but as Paul wrote in Romans 1:18, they are storing up the wrath of God and they will have to suffer the consequences when God's holds His final judgment and they are called to give account of their lives (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10-12).

Titles of Jesus (1) - King

David Cooper | Evening Shade, Arkansas, USA

This article will discuss the proofs of Jesus as king, then when that kingdom began, and finally the extent of his dominion. First, we will cover some prophetic evidences of Jesus as king. Next, I will notice the statements of Jesus and his contemporaries. After that, I will discuss when and where Jesus' kingdom began. Finally, we will see the extent of Jesus' kingdom and his dominion over.

In Prophecy:

I believe the first revelation of our Lord's kingdom comes from the blessings of Jacob's son, Judah. Jacob prophesied:

"Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? A scepter will never depart from Judah nor a ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes and the people obey him in" (Genesis 49:9-10).

John in the Revelation is told by one of the elders, "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Revelation 5:5). The rest of the chapter explains that the Lion of the tribe of Judah is indeed the Lamb that was slain, Jesus. In Genesis 49:10 the Lion of the Tribe is also called "Shiloh," which means, "Peace." In Hebrews 7:17 He is named of the Father, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." In verses one and two of the same chapter of Hebrews Melchizedek is called the "King of Peace" and "King of Righteous."

The Psalmist says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom" (Psalm 45:6). The Hebrew writer restates this in Hebrews 1:8, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

The Psalmist also speaks of the world trying to defeat the Anointed and King, Jesus, of course, in Psalm 2. This is verified to refer to our Lord in Acts 4:25 -28:

"Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

Moreover Isaiah 9:7 states:

"There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."

The angel in Luke 1:31-33 confirms this King to be Jesus:

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Two Other prophesies verify Jesus as the Messiah, anointed king to come. First, The place of his birth is Prophesied in Micah 5:2:

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

The Chief priest and elders verified the place in Matthew 2:5-6:

"And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

Second, Zechariah 9:9 prophesies his triumphant entry into Jerusalem:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The actual entry is recorded in Matthew 21:5, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'behold your king is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden."

Jesus cannot rule from David's throne in Jerusalem and prosper.

There is a problem with those who say Jesus will reign from David's throne in Jerusalem and win a victory over Satan. There is no doubt that Jesus will/has defeated Satan and that he will sit on David's throne (Isaiah 9:7). The problem is where and when he will sit on David's throne. In Mark 9:1 Jesus states, "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." It is evident that the Kingdom began in that generation. Equally evident is that Jesus would not rule and prosper in the city of David, Jerusalem. He was a descendant of Jehoiachin ("Coniah"). Matthew 1:11 thus relates the genealogy of Jesus: "And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon." Jeremiah plainly states that no seed of Jehoakim could do reign in Jerusalem and prosper:

"Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD,

Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah”
(Jeremiah 22:28-30).

Jesus’ kingdom is in fact to be ruled from Heaven. He states this to Pilate in John 18:36:

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

It is also plain from this passage that his servants would not fight a physical war on this earth. Paul all confirms this in Ephesians 6:12, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” In fact, we Christians were and are translated into his Kingdom according to Paul, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). The Kingdom, therefore, is not future nor of this world.

Things Written Before

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Introduction

"Oh, you're one of those people who don't believe in the Old Testament!" This is the welcome I received one time from a person I had invited to our worship assembly. This person, and many like him, have the mistaken idea that members of the church of Christ do not believe the Old Testament. Actually, I believe the entire Bible.

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).

I believe “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). But, as with all the Bible, we must handle accurately the Old Testament. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, New American Standard Version). How, then, are we to use the Old Testament?

How Given

First, we must know how the Old Testament was given. Before Jesus came to earth, God spoke to men “at various times and in various ways” (Hebrews 1:1). How did God make known His will to people in the period of time covered by the Old Testament?

Age of Fathers

The Age of the Fathers is that period of time when God revealed His will through the fathers, the heads of the families. This arrangement lasted from Adam to Moses for all mankind, and continued to Christ for the Gentiles. What people knew of God under this arrangement was “received by tradition from” their “fathers” (1 Peter 1:18). For example, Abraham was a prophet of God (Genesis 20:7) whom the Lord knew would “command his children and his household after him” (Genesis 18:17-19). The Lord delivered to Abraham and the other patriarchs commands to obey and promises to receive as the reward for their faith and obedience. This was a family type religion, that is, God spoke to a particular family.

Law of Moses

In process of time God raised up a lawgiver named Moses, and the Mosaic Age began. This lasted from the time Moses gave the law at Mount Sinai until Christ replaced it with the New Testament. The Lord

spoke "in various ways" during this time. He revealed Himself through Moses, the lawgiver, who delivered the law

You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, By the hand of Moses Your servant (Nehemiah 9:13-14).

He advised through wise men, who gave counsel.

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion— a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel (Proverbs 1:1-5).

He taught through priests, who were the teachers and interpreters of the law.

Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: 'Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses (Leviticus 10:8-11).

He spoke through prophets, the inspired preachers of His word.

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy? (Amos 3:7-8)

He also spoke by psalmists, who gave to Israel its inspired poetry.

Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; Thus says the man raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel: 'The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue' (2 Samuel 23:1-2).

In all these ways the Old Testament was written. This was a national religion, that is, God revealed Himself to a special nation, Israel.

Old Testament Not Our Law

Is the Old Testament our law today? The law was never intended to be a permanent and full revelation of God's mind to man, but rather, was given for the express purpose of preparing the way for Christ.

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor (Galatians 3:23-25).

Furthermore, the law given through Moses was never intended for any people except the nation of Israel.

And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive (Deuteronomy 5:1-3).

Thus, with the death of Christ upon the cross, this temporary law, the Old Testament, was taken away.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things

to come, but the substance is of Christ (Colossians 2:13-17).

Law of Christ

Now, instead, God “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2). This is a universal religion in that God, through His Son, now wants His will revealed to “all the world.” “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’” (Mark 16:15). This being true, the man who goes back to the Old Testament and tries to be justified by it has “been severed from Christ.” “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4, **English Standard Version**).

Use of Old Testament

Does this mean we have no use for the law today? To the contrary, there are four important ways we can use the Old Testament.

Evidence

We can use it as evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that the Bible is the Word of God by studying the fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament. Christ told the Jews concerning their Scriptures, the Old Testament, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me” (John 5:39).

Source of Hope

The “things. . . written before” can be a source of hope to us, as we thrill to see revealed in it the faithfulness of God to bless those who patiently obey. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Shadow

The Old Testament serves as a “shadow,” that is, a dim outline and foretelling, of the New Covenant.

For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’ (Hebrews 8:4-5).

Examples

Finally, we can look to God’s dealings with His people, both to bless the faithful and to condemn the rebellious, and the way people either faithfully served the Lord or disgracefully fell, as examples for us in our efforts to please our Maker. Of Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness, the apostle warned, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). But of the worthies recounted in the “Hall of Faith,” Hebrews chapter eleven, the inspired writer observes:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

Conclusion

Thus, just as the apostle Paul, we must believe “all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14). But, also as Paul, we must not seek to be justified by the Old Testament. “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4, **English Standard Version**).

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified (Galatians 2:16).



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