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

In This Issue...

- **Is the Life in the Womb a Baby or a Mass of Tissue?** | *Keith Sharp*
- **Questions from Nigeria about the Resurrection of Christ**
- **Questions from Nigeria about the Work of the Church**
- **Jump Start # 2275** | *Roger Shouse*
- **Why Do We Need Church Creeds? 1** | *Jefferson David Tant*
- **Wise Walking (Eph 5:15-20)** | *Patrick Farish*
- **Preach The Man, Not The Plan (3)** | *Tommy J. Thornhill*
- **"Christ Also Suffered For Us"** | *Jimmy Mickells*
- **Baptism For The Dead** | *Mike Thomas*
- **The Man of Sin** | *William J. Stewart*
- **Titles of Jesus - Lord (2)** | *David Cooper*
- **Fornication** | *Keith Sharp*
- **Sin** | *Keith Sharp*

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.

Is the Life in the Womb a Baby or a Mass of Tissue?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

"When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.... 'For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy'" (Luke 1:41, 44).

As it reads to me, the living thing in the womb is a baby that already has emotions. How does it read to you? Is abortion removing a tissue mass or killing a baby? Up to 17 million people were legally murdered in the Holocaust. Worst mass murder in history? Since Roe vs Wade, there have been 60 million legal abortions in America.

Questions from Nigeria about the Resurrection of Christ

Questions

The synoptic accounts of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is different from that of John. Days he spent before his ascension.

His appearing to his disciples and to believer seems to be a bit confusing with the account of Luke in Acts chapter one vs nine. Now if the church began on first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus christ, how come the forty days? The feast of Pentecost is known as feast of weeks and when calculated is 49days

and the morrow becomes the 50th which is Pentecost. Now Christ was buried on a Friday and resurrected the third day and was ascended to heaven before he gave his apostles the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now how do we harmonise the whole account of spending forty days and appearing to people.

How many resurrection do we have, my querist are very much eagger for ANSWERS.

Answer

Christ's Resurrection, Ascension and the Day of Pentecost

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

In answering this question, we must note some things:

One, the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke (usually referred to as synoptic gospels) are different from that of John. But that does not say it all. They are different but complementary. All the gospel accounts emanated from the same Mind, God (1 Corinthians 2:7-13). They are all inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21). The accounts are different, but not contradictory.

Two, even the account as given by Luke in chapter 24 of his gospel might be viewed by some superficial reader as being contradictory to the one he gave in Acts chapter 1. In Luke 24, a not-too-careful reader might come up with the impression that Jesus ascended to heaven on the very day He arose from the dead. However, the truth is that Luke describes the Lord's appearances and conversations on the resurrection morning, afternoon up to the evening of that day, leaving out all the other appearances as mentioned by the other gospel writers until the final appearance and final instructions He gave on the day of ascension (Luke 24:1-53). But in-between these appearances on the day of resurrection and the day of ascension were:

- His appearance to the disciples when Thomas was with them "after eight days "from the resurrection (John 20:26-29).
- His appearance to the disciples in Galilee during which he asked Peter repeatedly if he loved Him and made him to catch 153 fish.
- His appearance to "five hundred brethren at once ... he was seen of James" (1 Corinthians 15:6-7).

Three, it could be palpably seen that Luke simply summarized all the Lord's appearances from the day of resurrection culminating in His final appearance on the day of ascension, altogether spanning a period of forty days (Acts 1:3).

Now, we go back to His final instruction to the disciples in Acts 1:5: "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." How many days were there between the day of ascension when He gave this final instruction and the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles? Acts 2:1-4 tells us: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

We learn from Leviticus 23:15-16 that the Passover (which comes up on the twilight of the 14th day of Nisan) will have the children of Israel count seven Sabbaths from the morrow after the Sabbath of the Passover week. Please note and this is very crucial: the counting does NOT begin from the morrow after the Passover. If it were, the fiftieth day which is Pentecost could fall on any day of the week. Rather, the counting of seven Sabbaths begins from the morrow after the Sabbath of the Passover week. That is why the feast of Pentecost always falls on the first day of the week.

Therefore, we come to the conclusion that from the day of resurrection to the day of ascension of Christ was forty days. From the day of ascension to the day of Pentecost was ten days. This makes a total of fifty days from the Sabbath of the Passover week when Jesus ate the feast with His disciples to the morrow of the seventh Sabbath which was the day of Pentecost of Acts chapter 2.

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Questions from Nigeria about the Work of the Church

Questions

Please I have the following questions: 1. Is it scriptural for the church to have a special fundraising schemes such as launching, investing in treasury bills, having what is called 'second collection' in order to raise funds for church building? 2. Is it scriptural to have committees in church e.g Evangelism committee, Edification committee, Disciplinary/Counseling committee, Benevolence Committee, Visitation committee, etc? 3. Is it scriptural for the church to be financially involved in the burial of a member? If no, what if the member was indigent when he was alive? Thanks in anticipation.

Answers

Thanks for the good questions. Here are what I believe are the scriptural answers.

(1) The only way the church is to raise money is by a free will offering of its own members each first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Both the **New American Standard Bible** and the **English Standard Version**, which are generally accurate, "essentially literal" translations, translate verse two, "on the first day of every week." The apostle specifically commanded this contribution to be taken each first day of the week so that there would not be a special collection (verse 2).

(2) The authorized organization of the local church is "saints" (members – 1 Corinthians 12:27), "bishops" ("overseers" – **NASB, ESV**), and "deacons" ("attendant, servant" – William D. Mounce, **Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words**. 1120). Certainly the overseers (i.e., bishops, elders, pastors – Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2) may select a group of men or women to carry out a scripturally authorized task for the church (Acts 13:1-3), but decision-making authority remains with the elders (1 Timothy 5:17), or, for a congregation without elders, with all the men of the congregation (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:12).

(3) The work of the church is limited to spiritual activities (John 18:36; Romans 14:17), i.e., evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 6-8), edification (Ephesians 4:11-16), and benevolence for needy saints (Acts 4:32-35; 11:29-30). If a needy saint is unable to bury his own dead, the church may assist him, as an act of benevolence. Throughout the nations in Africa where I have traveled, it is a custom for the family of the deceased to provide an elaborate feast for those who attend the funeral. This is not a benevolent necessity and is not the work of the church.

Jump Start # 2275

Roger Shouse | New Albany, Indiana, USA

Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God he made man."

Last week the governor of New York signed a new abortion bill for the state. Now abortions are legal up to the due date of delivery. That means a nine month old baby can be put to death. Our first child was born on his due date. In NY, that child could be aborted legally. And, worse, as cameras showed the governor signing the bill, those gathered around him cheered and applauded as if they had won free tickets to Disney. I expect tears were flowing in Heaven. This is where atheism and evolution intersect with extreme liberal politics. What an ugly combination they make.

Now, some thoughts:

First, these innocent souls are not forgotten by Heaven. The aborted bodies may be tossed in the trash, but their pure souls are filling Heaven. God knows. From Heaven's side of things, those innocent and pure

souls were never touched by sin. They never blasphemed the Lord's name. They never had a blemish on them. They will be eternally safe and those heartless lawmakers who passed this bill have a strong chance of never seeing what they will see. Not all is lost. The souls of those babies are saved.

Second, there is no depth to wickedness and shamefulness. The argument that abortion is a woman's choice and the baby is a part of her body is not only ridiculously stupid, but it shows ignorance in biology, common sense and decency. The baby can be a different sex, blood type, eye color and hair color from the mother. It has its own unique finger prints. The mother is merely the carrier of this child. Her choice ended long before this when she climbed into bed with someone to have sex. That's where the choice begins.

Now, like the same-sex movement, this isn't the end. You don't hear about same-sex marriage in the news anymore. That movement has moved on. Transgender is where it's parked today. But once that's accepted, they will move on. The same with abortion. What's next? Clean out the nursing homes and put those old folks to death? Once respect and reverence for any part of life is missing, all of life is at stake.

Behind this isn't liberal theology or brainless politicians, but Satan. He was dancing and smiling with the governor and his crowd. Don't be surprised how ungodly ungodliness can get. Don't be surprised when people without principles, morals or heart get in charge and make rules for the rest. Sin can sink very deeply and very far.

Third, God knows and God is aware. There are people who are responsible for this. Judgment comes. There are consequences to all the choices we make in life. Throughout time, the people of God have been oppressed, harassed, abused, punished and persecuted. They were slaves in Egypt. They were captives in Babylon. They were hunted down by the Romans. Pharaoh killed babies. Herod killed babies. Laws have been made to stop the spread of the Gospel. It never works. People have tried to destroy Bibles. They always fail. What liberals, atheists and those without heart fail to realize is that they may have size, voice and power, but so did Goliath. What disciples have is God on their side. Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. Who will separate us from the love of Christ is what Paul asked in Romans. Sadly, there will be mothers who end their pregnancy by abortion. They could opt to adopt those children, but they won't. There will be medical staff who will gladly do the procedures that ends the life of those babies. Money will be exchanged and everyone will go on as if nothing happened. But something did happen. A life, as our verse today reminds us, made in the image of God was stopped. There are all kinds of moral, emotional and mental consequences that follow an abortion. Several years ago, I had my gall bladder removed. I don't ever think about that gall bladder. I don't miss it. But a child is not a gall bladder. You feel that child inside of you. It changes you. Every child you see after that makes you wonder if that's what your child would have looked like. There is no reversing an abortion. Once it's done, it's permanent.

Fourth, the overwhelming stats reveal that it's single women who get the most abortions. Rather than putting an end to the consequences of fornication, why not address the front end of the problem. People need Jesus. People need direction and guidance. Wrong choices, bad influences have led to having sexual relations with someone you are not married to. Young and in school. Young and early in your career. A baby messes those things up. Should have thought about that before you took your clothes off. All sin comes with consequences. An abortion is a way to make it all go away, but it never does. God knows. A life was taken. More sins were added by more people.

Years ago, my wife became pregnant with our third child. I was a young preacher making very little money. We lived in a small house and things were tight. We hadn't planned on this. I didn't know how we were going to afford the hospital bill. I didn't know what we were going to do. Abortion was never considered. My sweet grandmother passed away a few months before the delivery. I received an inheritance that covered the medical and hospital bill for the delivery. God provided. That child today preaches. He is amazing as all my kids are in their own way. Through his work, already hundreds of lives have been touched by the Gospel he preaches. None of that would have happened, had his life been aborted. Through his family now,

two young boys from Korea have been adopted. Their lives have been changed forever because of that. Do you see the thread running through all of this? One life touches so many. One life can make such a difference. One life can influence hundreds. But that chain is broken when a selfish person decides that they do not want a baby that has been started within them.

Someday all of this will be over. The righteous and the wicked will be separated. We will be out of this crazy place and the wicked will find out what a terrible, terrible mistake that they have made with their lives. Selfish and living without God is a dead end street that points to Hell. Governments have made wrong decisions and laws for a long time. We rejoice that we live in a time when such people can be voted out and even if they aren't, the God of Heaven rules. He always does!

Why Do We Need Church Creeds? (1)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Does your denomination have a creed? I suppose most denominations have an official creed outlining the things that distinguish one denomination from another. I have a box full of such books. These include the Catholic **New Baltimore Catechism**, the Baptist **Hiscox Standard Manual** for Baptist Churches, the **Methodist Discipline**, the **Book of Mormon**, the Jehovah's Witnesses **Truth that Leads to Eternal Life**, the Christian Science **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures**, the Episcopalian **Book of Common Prayer**, the Presbyterian **Confession of Faith**, the Assemblies of God **The Local Church**, the Lutheran **Small Catechism**, the Salvation Army **Chosen to be a Soldier**, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ **Discipline**, the **Treatise of the Faith and Practice** of the Original Free Will Baptists, the Pentecostal Holiness **Discipline**, etc. Well, I could go on and on, but don't have the time or ink to name all 42,000 different denominations. They all claim to follow Christ, with their faith based on the Bible's teaching.

But that cannot be true! It should be patently obvious that all these doctrinal statements represent confusion and division, and this is exactly the opposite of what Christ prayed for and what the apostles worked for. Consider a few Scriptures on this subject. In the gospel of John, we have a record of Christ praying to His Father.

"I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me, .And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me" (John 17:20-23).

What did Christ pray for? He prayed that his 12 disciples might be united as He and the Father were. And this unity would be a sign that Christ had been sent into the world. Are these 42,000 denominations united? Obviously not. Some teach that Christ was born of a virgin, while some teach that Adam is now God and he came to earth and had sex with Mary—(Mormons). Thus, she was not a virgin, but also guilty of adultery, since she was engaged to Joseph. And then others teach that Jesus is not the Son of God, but is Michael the archangel--(Jehovah's Witnesses). Some churches teach that Christ fulfilled all prophecies made about him, while others teach that Christ was prevented by Satan from establishing his kingdom, and that he will come again sometime to establish his kingdom on earth and rule for 1,000 years (Premillennialists). A growing number of denominations are now ordaining women and homosexuals into the ministry, while others insist that the Scriptures do not allow this. That's not what I would call "being perfected in unity." What can we conclude from this? If this is not what God wants and what Christ prayed for, then it must be the work of Satan. Can anyone truthfully dispute that conclusion?

Now, think for a moment. Jesus prayed for the disciples' unity, just as he and the Father were one—united. So I ponder this and think about the unity in heaven. "Could it be that the Father is a Baptist, and Christ is a Unitarian, and the Holy Spirit a Catholic?" No sane person would consider such a possibility. And therefore, the unity Christ prayed for is not represented by the denominational division we have.

So, what is the cause of this division and confusion? Would it be Satan? Who could argue with that conclusion. Consider Paul's warning about false teachers to the church at Corinth.

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

In Paul's earlier letter to Corinth, he encouraged them...

"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Is the denominational division we have in the world today an answer to that exhortation by Paul? Obviously not, but rather far from it.

Satan was already at work in the early church, and Paul dealt with this more than once, as did the other writers. He encouraged them to be "complete in the same mind and in the same judgment." He did not tell them to "do their own thing." Even in a local congregation there was division.

"For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you" (1 Corinthians 11:18-19).

Who can rightly claim that the Bible allows all this division and confusion? If anyone would make such a claim, I would refer him to 1 Corinthians 14:33: "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

Did you notice what Paul wrote? He said God is not "a God of confusion, as in all the churches of the saints." I suppose that most, if not all, of the 42,000 denominations, would claim they are a church that belongs to God. Are all of those denominations in unity? Obviously not. Is there confusion? Obviously so. Are there conflicting doctrines? Who can deny it? So, what's the logical conclusion? That this confusion and division is not of God. Then what is the source of this confusion and division? Who else but Satan through his "false apostles and deceitful workers, who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ"?

Notice something else Paul wrote to Timothy:

"For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17).

What did Paul write? He wrote of "my ways which are in Christ," which "I teach everywhere in every church." Let us suppose that there were different denominations then, and Paul decided to go on a short journey preaching three times a week. He went to Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Salvation Army, Episcopalian, etc., churches. Could he preach the same thing in each of these churches? Obviously not, for they all teach different and contradicting doctrines.

But of course there were no differing denominations then. Christ promised to build "my church" (Matthew 16:18). He did not promise to build "my churches" that would teach "differing doctrines."

Wise Walking, Ephesians 5:15-20

Patrick Farish | Wauxahatchie, Texas, USA

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise."

This is the fifth time Paul has used the word "walk" in this epistle. First, "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (4:1); "no longer walk as the Gentiles do" (4:17); "walk in love" (5:2); "walk as children of light" (5:8) – and then our text, "walk ... as wise" (5:15). Like "conversation" in the **KJV**, "walk" today does not have the same significance it did when Paul wrote. "Walk" looks at manner of life, at

what is habitual. It reflects the admonition of Galatians 6:9, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Did your mother ever tell you, when you were going somewhere that necessitated crossing a street, "look both ways"? Sure she did; that was good advice from someone who cared. In like manner, Paul tells the Ephesians to walk "not as unwise but as wise" – look both ways.

To walk as wise, Paul says, don't waste time – "make the best use of the time." With the same words, He tells the Colossians to "walk in wisdom toward outsiders" (4:5). Jesus said "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We never know who is watching, so let your light shine: our "good works" may not only assist another, but also give glory to God.

In First Corinthians three Paul says that the wisdom of this world is "folly with God" (verses 18-19). James writes of the "wisdom from above" (3:13-17). To the Ephesians the choice is, understand the will of God – or be foolish. What does that say of those who have so much of the world's wisdom ... and so little of the will of the Lord? That, in spite of what they "know," ultimately they are "unwise" ("foolish," **ASV**; "fools," **KJV**). John wrote, whoever "does the will of God abides forever" (2 John 2:17). The question is, then, whose "will" are **you** doing?

Then, intoxicating beverages. Isn't Madison Avenue doing a great job of making that poisonous swill appear to be something that is essential, delightful and innocent? Homes wrecked and lives destroyed mean nothing, they have made intoxicants synonymous with "pleasure" and "sophistication."

Scripture says drunkenness is "debauchery." The **American College Dictionary** says debauchery is "seduction from virtue or morality. Excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures"; in defining "debauch" such words as "pervert," "depraved" and "corrupt" are used. God says, if you get drunk you are perverted, depraved and corrupt. Who wants to stand before God in judgment, with those words in his resume?

Oh but, someone says, it is drunkenness, not drinking, that is prohibited. That is valid, if "drunkenness" does not require, first, the taking of a "drink." One who has never taken a drink can never be drunk. Furthermore, how can one take the first step to drunkenness, debauchery, whose genuine desire is to see heaven? One who takes a drink has no idea where that will lead.

Immediately after the warning about drunkenness, Paul says "be filled with the Spirit." In the face of scoffing from good friends and good Bible students, I believe that verse eighteen is a discussion of choices: "do not get drunk ... but be filled with the spirit." Choosing drunkenness is choosing debauchery. Choosing to walk by the Spirit is choosing to be governed by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. How else account for both drunkenness and the Spirit in one verse?

Finally, having instructed the Ephesians to be filled with the Spirit, he calls attention to one aspect of this, "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart" (Colossians 3:16 has similar instruction)

The process of addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs involves "singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." There has been controversy since the seventh century about the introduction of instrumental music in worship. The simple answer is, we are told to sing and make melody to the Lord – and this is what we do.

We are told, however, that we have missed the point on the word translated "sing" – "psallo." Lexicographers say this word means to twitch or twang or pluck, and the instrument to be twitched, twanged or plucked must be named – something that can be twitched, twanged or plucked. And surely

their case would have been formidable, had not the Holy Spirit led Paul to name the instrument to be, twined, etc. The instrument? Make “melody to the Lord with your heart” – your heart! No other instrument is involved. If the heart is not there, there is no acceptable worship.

A side note: we like to sing, but fear that sometime more emphasis is given to musical ability than to the One to whom we are making melody – “to the Lord.”

Preach The Man, Not The Plan (3)

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

We continue our study of the false doctrine, “preach the Man, but not the plan,” that grew out of the “Grace-Fellowship,” “Unity in Diversity” movement of the last third of the 20th century, in which people felt that brethren were putting too much emphasis on the doctrine of Christ, while neglecting to preach more about Jesus, where the main emphasis should be placed. To a lot of people this made the church too exclusive, for it caused the gospel of Christ to be out of balance, and was excluding many sincere brethren who couldn’t agree on doctrine (teaching). To correct this perceived imbalance, preachers with very little respect for and real understanding of the authority of God’s word, conceived and began to preach the idea that in the New Testament a distinction was made between “preaching the gospel” and “teaching the doctrine.” The reasoning behind this concept was designed to open the door to “fellowship” those who believed in, and advocated doctrinal and innovative ideas that were contrary to “sound doctrine.”

Before I go further, let me agree that Jesus Christ must be the main focus of all gospel preaching. There is no way that a person can really grasp a need to obey Christ in faith and doctrine without first understanding why He came to the earth, why He had to become the only sacrifice God would accept, instead of animals, why He had to die on the cross. And this is exactly what the apostles taught. One cannot read the New Testament without seeing how they faithfully carried out the responsibility given to them by Christ in the great commission (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 10:42-43). Beginning on the Day of Pentecost they went throughout the world, declaring in plain, simple words, the gospel, the good news, proclaiming Jesus Christ had come to fulfill God’s divine plan formulated from eternity. Everywhere they went they made known this wisdom of God and His power (1 Corinthians 1:17-24). In spite of threats, arrests, persecution, and a multitude of other things they suffered, they “ceased not to preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). Consider also, “this Jesus, whom you crucified God has made both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). But, they didn’t just talk about the Man, they also told of His doctrine (teaching).

Yes, while New Testament preachers put Jesus at the center of their teaching, they also included as a part of their teaching, the doctrine (teaching) of Christ. When you study the sermons in the book of Acts, you can see that they made no distinction between the gospel of Christ and His doctrine (teaching). If one accepted and believed the gospel of Christ one had to also believe and accept the doctrine He taught (Matthew 7:28; John 7:16-17). They not only were to believe and accept His doctrine which He had received from His Father, they were to also continue to abide in His doctrine (what He taught; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 John 9-11). Just like the song, “Love and marriage, like a horse and carriage, you can’t have one without the other,” so it is with the gospel of Christ and His doctrine. You can’t have one without the other. Just to remind people, the basic meaning of “doctrine” is “teaching.”

In Acts eight we have two examples of the preacher, Philip, preaching the gospel to lost sinners. In both instances, Jesus was certainly the center of his sermons, but in preaching Christ he also interwove Christ’s doctrine into the lessons.

Note the first example. Philip the preacher went to Samaria to preach the gospel (8:5-13). What did he preach? It was certainly more than the mere facts of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection.

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed, and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip and was amazed,

seeing the miracles and signs which were done” (8:12-13).

If Philip just preached Christ (the gospel), why is it said he also preached concerning the kingdom of God (doctrine)? And how did the people know they needed to be baptized (doctrine) if he only preached the gospel? Yes, Christ was the central emphasis, but Jesus’ doctrine (His teaching) about the kingdom of God and the need for baptism was mixed into it.

Later, in Acts 8:26-40, Philip is told by an angel to “arise and go toward the south along the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza” (8:26). Following the angel’s instructions, he is put in contact with the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch, evidently a proselyte Jew, had been to Jerusalem and is now returning to Ethiopia. He sees Philip, stops his chariot, and invites Philip into the chariot. The Eunuch has been reading Isaiah 53, and asks Philip what the prophet meant. At this point Philip

“opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture (Isa.53:7-8), preached Jesus to him.

Now, as they went down the road, they came to some water, and the Eunuch said, ‘see, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘if you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.’

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him” (8:35-38).

How did the Eunuch know to be baptized (doctrine) if Philip only preached the gospel? In preaching the gospel, Philip must have, by necessary inference in the context, included the doctrine of Christ, belief and baptism in order to be saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

How much did the Eunuch know when he became a Christian? I don’t know. But, the context tells he had been to Jerusalem to worship, which showed he was a devout person who already knew of God, and was familiar with the Old Testament scriptures when Philip met him. It is true Philip preached the man, but he also taught the plan.

Let me pause a moment, and point out briefly what I understand the basic meanings of the words “gospel” and “doctrine” mean. The word “gospel” simply means “good news” about anything. W. E. Vine writes that “gospel” “in the NT, denotes the good tidings of the kingdom of God and salvation through Christ, to be received by faith, on the basis of His expiatory death, His burial, resurrection, and ascension, e.g. Acts 15:7; 20:24; 1.Pet.4:17.” (W.E. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of NT Words). In other words telling the good news about God’s plan of salvation in the New Testament. “Doctrine” basically means “teaching” or “instruction,” as it refers to that which is being taught or learned (Matthew 7:28; Mark 4:2; Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 4:16; Titus 1:9).

Vine also points out that while the gospel is used to declare the basic facts of Jesus Christ, the death-burial-resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-3), it is also used to interpret (teach the meaning) of the facts, historically and doctrinally, with reference to the interpretation of the facts.

When you study the New Testament you find several terms that are used in connection with the gospel. You communicate the gospel (Galatians 2:2). You speak the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:2). You testify the gospel (Acts 20:24). You preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1; Galatians 1:11).

In my last article I dealt with their misuse of 2 John 9-10, “whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son,” which clearly refers to one “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). You can’t separate Christ from His doctrine.

This gospel/doctrine distinction grew out of a desire to include “fellowship” with people who claim a belief in Jesus Christ, but are not willing to follow His doctrine. This false doctrine was formulated by people who were (and still are) seeking to broaden the boundaries of “fellowship” to include religious persons who want to go “beyond what is written,” i.e., to accept doctrines that are not authorized in the word of God. No, you can’t preach the man without the plan. Nor can you preach Christ and not teach about His church. Jesus

Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). How will the head function without the body? How will the body function without the head? They must function together, just like the gospel and doctrine.

"Christ Also Suffered For Us"

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When the apostle Peter writes his first epistle, he tells servants they are to be submissive to their masters, even those who are harsh (1 Peter 2:18). Certainly, this may involve suffering at the hands of those who had rule over them. In this discussion he reminds them of the suffering which Christ experienced for all of us (1 Peter 2:21). I dare say when we contemplate the suffering Messiah, most likely we are thinking about all the physical pain He endured. It is for sure the Christ suffered immensely for the sins of all the world. Let us consider some of the misery which Jesus suffered so that you and I could go to a place where there is no more pain (Revelation 21:4).

He suffered physical pain. In Mark 14:65, it says they (which would be the Jews) beat Him, and the officers (of the Sanhedrin) struck Him with the palms of their hand. The Roman soldiers took a reed and struck Him on the head, on which was a crown of thorns (Matthew 27:27-30). In John's account it says these soldiers struck Him with their hands (John 19:3). Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judea, has Jesus scourged (John 19:1). Vincent gives this definition of the word "scourged":

"The punishment was horrible, the victim being bound to a low pillar or stake, and beaten, either with rods, or, in the case of slaves and provincials, with scourges, called scorpions, leather thongs tipped with leaden balls or sharp spikes. The severity of the infliction in Jesus' case is evident from His inability to bear His cross" (**Word Studies in the New Testament**).

Then after all this to have His hands and feet nailed to the cross to experience one of the most agonizing deaths ever inflicted upon a man (Psalm 22:16).

He suffered loss – what He gave up. He left heaven and came to a world filled with suffering and sin. Could you imagine a king giving up his palace, with all the comforts it affords, and going to live in a third world country in a hut where food is in short supply, with no running water, and no comfortable bed to sleep in, etc. This pales in comparison to what Christ gave up. There is a song which we sing entitled "Ivory Palaces" and in the chorus it says, "Out of the ivory palaces, Into a world of woe; Only His great eternal love, Made my Savior go." Paul said, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He gave up the wealth of His heavenly condition, robbed Himself in flesh, accepting such poverty, and willingly faced the same temptations as we do. All this so that we might become rich in receiving the abundance of spiritual blessings bestowed upon us through Him.

He suffered mental distress. Could you imagine coming to your own people, trying only to do them good, and then they reject you? That is what Jesus did (John 1:11). Betrayed by one of His own disciples for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 27:3). When facing condemnation unjustly by His Jewish people, those who would become His apostles fled (Matthew 26:56). One of His closest companions would curse and swear, denying he even knew Him (Matthew 26:74). Treated with such indignity by being spit on, mocked and ridiculed by the Roman soldiers (Matthew 27:27-31). The chief priest and the elders persuaded the people to ask Pilate to release a common criminal rather than the Son of God (Matthew 27:20-26). And above all this, forsaken by His God (Matthew 27:46). This happened because of the determined purpose and foreknowledge of Jehovah (Acts 2:23). He let His Son die so that you and I could live.

Why did He suffer? One – it was to fulfill prophecy concerning His coming and suffering. "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (Acts 3:18). Two – to do the Father's will.

"Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had

no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come-- In the volume of the book it is written of Me-- To do Your will, O God'" (Hebrews 10:5-7).

Three – to redeem us from our sins. “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

O Lord please help us to think often of all the suffering which Jesus endured to save our sinful souls and may it motivate us to live for Him faithfully each day.

Baptism for the Dead

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

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

The New Testament does not agree with this doctrine. Jesus and His apostles commanded people to obey only one baptism in Christianity (Ephesians 4:5). He sent the apostles into all the world to convince men of that baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). Those who believed the apostles were baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38-40). They did not teach or command any other baptism. If so, where is the verse that says so?

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

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

The great fallacy of this doctrine is that nothing in Christianity may be done by proxy. No one may believe for another or meet any other act of obedience to God. He holds each person responsible for his own choices (Romans 14:12). All throughout the Bible, God has had a consistent message: “The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (Ezekiel 18:20). Ironically, one the greatest supports of this principle comes from the teachings of the founder of the Mormon faith, Joseph Smith, who wrote:

For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God...Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world...For

behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked” (Alma 34:32, 34, 35).

God's word agrees this warning. The dead are eternally accountable for their choices in life: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10-11). Until that judgment, the dead must wait in Hades, the realm of the dead, where Jesus Himself went when He died on the cross (Acts 2:27, 31). In Hades, no one may change his condition from one side to the other because of the great gulf that is fixed between the two sides (Luke 16:26). Everyone must remain in their condition as they await the judgment. We had better be thankful that is the case because if we could do things in this life to move the dead from a lost condition to being saved, we could also do things to cause the saved there to be lost. If not, why not?

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

...The Man of Sin

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Something that stands out about Paul's letters to the church at Thessalonica is that he mentions the coming of the Lord in every chapter. Check it out (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-17; 5:2-10, 23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:1-3; 3:5). The apostle wanted these young Christians to be focused on and prepared for the Lord's return.

Paul spoke about the second coming as though it were an imminent thing. He did not, nor could he say when it would happen, but he acknowledged the possibility that it could be within his lifetime.

Understand, there were a few things that needed to be accomplished first. Jesus said the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed in that generation (Matthew 24:1-2, 34-35), and the gospel would be preached in all the world (Matthew 24:14) before that. In Colossians 1:23, Paul borrows the same language used by Jesus in Mark 16:15, as he affirmed the gospel "*was preached to every creature under heaven.*" Scholars tend to peg the letter to the Colossians between 58-62 AD.

In 70 AD, the temple fell to the Romans, and thus all that Jesus said had to happen before His return had happened.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the Holy Spirit had Paul add one more thing which needed to take place. He wrote:

...for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Before the Lord's return, there would be a falling away, an apostasy. Of course, this would seem to fit well in the years leading up to Jerusalem's destruction (see Matthew 24:4-5, 10-12). But Paul also spoke of "the man of sin" being revealed. Who is that, and when did (or will) that take place?

There's no shortage of speculation about the man of sin. Some have thought it is Satan himself, the Jewish zealots, a Roman ruler (ie. Nero), the Antichrist, the Pope, etc.. So, who is the man of sin?

The man of sin is said to be the son of perdition. This is a title which is applied to Judas (John 17:12). This phrase tells us something about the character and the eternal end of the man of sin. Perdition means ruin, loss, destruction, death or waste.

The man of sin opposes God. He or they are antichrist. Now, don't misunderstand. The Biblical use of that term has nothing to do with an evil world power or leader, but simply means "against Christ." Anyone who is not for Christ is against Christ (Mark 12:30).

The man of sin also exalts himself above God. God is not #1 in his life, he is. He doesn't worship the LORD, but is an adherent to the religion of MEism and perpetually bows at the altar of self.

In fact, Paul says the man of sin sits as God in the temple of God. Some believe this could be the Roman invasion of the temple of Jerusalem, but that really wasn't the temple of God anymore. The heart of the Christian is where God's temple is now. So let me ask you a question, Who reigns in your heart? The man of sin won't choose to have God reign in his life, but will be the ruler of his own heart.

So, who is the man of sin? Rather than it being a particular person, may I suggest it is representative of the mindset of a group of people - those who have departed from the Lord. That may not be as elaborate as Satan, Jewish zealots, Nero, the Hollywood version of the Antichrist, the Pope or other explanations that have been given, but it fits the context without the need for guesswork. Our task is to be honest with the text, not to develop a dramatic interpretation.

Some may argue for a singular person on the basis of the text reading "man of sin" rather than "men of sin." In both Ephesians 2:15 and 4:13, the word "man" is used to refer to a group rather than a single individual. Notice:

"...having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace..." (Ephesians 2:15)

"...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of Man, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:13)

Let us not be the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposes God and exalts himself, keeping the throne of our lives for ourselves and not the Lord. Rather, let us serve the Lord faithfully, always ready for the coming of our Lord; for we do not know the time of His coming.

Titles of Jesus - Lord (2)

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There are four words translated as "lord" in the Scripture. The first is "LORD" which is used for the tetragram YHWH, which is "Yahweh" that we Pronounce "Jehovah." The second and third are "Adon" and "Adonai" which in order refer to God and a ruler, usually a king. The fourth is the New Testament term for master, "Kurios." "Kurios" is used for both God and man, thus replacing both "Adon" and "Adonai", which are from the Old Testament. Jesus is given all these titles at one point or another in the Scriptures.

Jesus is called "LORD" or "Jehovah" in Jeremiah 23:5-6. He is the Righteous branch of David in verse five and named Jehovah the righteous in verse 6. Matthew speaking of John the Baptist says, "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:3). He is quoting from Isaiah 40:3 where Isaiah uses the "LORD" or "Jehovah" for the Lord. Jesus also calls himself "LORD" or "Jehovah" in John 8:58, when Jesus said unto them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The Jews understood what he meant because they tried to stone him. The word "Jehovah" simply means "I am" as was told to Moses at the burning bush, when God stated, "Tell the people The I am that I am, tell them I

am hath sent me.” Therefore Jesus is I am or always existent as Hebrews 13:8 states, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Jesus is called “Lord,” “Adon” and “Adonay” in Psalm 110. He is called “Adon” in verse one and “Adonay” in verse five. We know verse one refers to Jesus because Jesus hints that it is him in Matthew 22:44 and Luke recites the same instance in Luke 20:42. Peter ascribes it directly to Jesus in the first Gospel sermon Acts 2:34-36. Verse five is in the same context and just after Jesus is called a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek in verse four. We know this refers to Jesus from a passage in Hebrews (5:5-6):

“So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

“Kyrios” or “kurius” is a Greek word which is usually translated as “lord” or “master.” In a religious sense, it is sometimes translated “God.” It is also used in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament. “Kyrios” appears about 740 times in the New Testament, usually referring to Jesus.

There are at least two other words that are sometimes translated “master.” They both refer to a religious teacher or guide. “Rhab-be” is a term showing more honor. But Jesus uses both in Matthew 23:8 and places no difference between them, “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” Jesus states that both can only be attributed to him. Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a master teacher when he called Him, “Rabbi” (John 3:2).

Jesus is the Lord of Lords, master of masters.

“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”(1 Timothy 6:14-15; cf. Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

He was exalted to this State by God the Father.

“Therefore God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, and at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, or those who in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

He is Head of the Church. “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). Paul makes this even more concrete in Ephesians 1:22: “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”

Fornication

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What's the greatest danger we face today as a society and as individuals both in America and throughout the world? No, it's not terrorism, war, pollution, global warming, or illegal immigration. It's a problem that has been here almost as long as mankind. It is fornication.

In Gentile society in the first century, sexual immorality was the accepted norm, even as it is in America and throughout the world today.

In Greece there had never been any shame in relationships before marriage or outside marriage. Demosthenes writes as if it was the merest commonplace, as indeed it was: ‘We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for the day-to-day needs of the body, but we have wives in order to produce children legitimately and to have a trustworthy guardian of our homes....when Solon was the first to legalize prostitution and to open state brothels, the profits from them were used to erect temples to the gods. Roman women, says Seneca, were married to be divorced and were divorced to be married. Some of them distinguished the years, not by the names of the consuls, but by the names of their husbands. ‘Chastity

is simply a proof of ugliness. '... Innocence, says Seneca, is not rare, it is non-existent.... From the highest to the lowest society was riddled with homosexuality. This was a vice Rome learned from Greece... (Barclay. 24-26).

It doesn't seem to be much better in twenty-first century America. "More than nine out of 10 Americans, ... have had premarital sex.... 'Premarital sex is normal behavior for the vast majority of Americans...'" (AP).

Corinth was the Las Vegas, San Francisco, or New Orleans of the Roman world. The phrase "to live like a Corinthian" referred to a life of gross immorality. To the Christians who lived in Corinth Paul warned, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). What should be our attitude toward fornication?

Definition

The term translated "fornication" in the **KJV**, "sexual immorality" in the **NIV**, **NKJV**, and **ESV**, and simply "immorality" in the **NASB** basically means "prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse" (Arndt & Gingrich. 699; so Thayer. 532; Vine. 2:125; Moulton & Milligan, 529; **TDNT**. 6:579-595). It has a narrower usage of sexual intercourse between unmarried people (Hebrews 13:4) but can be used of the "unchastity" of married people (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; **NASB**). It includes homosexual sex (Jude verse 7) as well as rape (Deuteronomy 22:25-27), bestiality (Leviticus 18:23), prostitution (Leviticus 19:29), incest (Matthew 14:3-4), bigamy (**TDNT**. 6:588; cf. Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:2), and polygamy (Matthew 19:4-5; 1 Corinthians 7:2).

Why So Prevalent?

Why is sexual immorality so widespread? Obviously, the most basic reason is that most people of the world and many Christians succumb to fleshly lusts (1 John 2:16; Matthew 5:27-28). Many in the world do so in ignorance, falsely believing that, as long as they love each other, premarital sex is acceptable (Hosea 4:6,14; Ephesians 4:17-19). Because we live in an immoral society, many Christians are caught up in the prevailing lewdness (cf. Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:20-24). The mass media – television, movies, magazines, popular music, internet – bombard us constantly with sex and loose morals. To watch and listen to such filth is to be guilty of lewdness and to court temptation rather than to flee from it (2 Corinthians 12:21; 2 Timothy 2:22). Tragically, many religious leaders condone sexual immorality rather than condemn it (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4).

What Are Its Results?

Probably no sin has more devastating effects than sexual immorality. The AIDS epidemic that threatens to engulf much of the world is directly caused by fornication (cf. Romans 1:27). Many other sexually transmitted diseases also attack the bodies of fornicators. Furthermore, sexual immorality leads to the destruction of the family and the myriads of sorrows that divorce brings (Matthew 5:32). The nation is weakened as the homes on which it is built are destroyed and the children cursed by the blight of divorce lack guidance (cf. Leviticus 20:22-23). Fornication will destroy the church where it is permitted to exist unchecked (1 Corinthians 5:1-6; Revelation 2:14-16). Above all else, sexual immorality will destroy the souls of those who practice it (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-6; Revelation 21:8).

What Should We Do About It?

What can Christians do about the terrible plague of sexual immorality that is destroying our world? To begin with, we can keep ourselves pure (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7). To do so, we must get our hearts right, by refusing to watch, read, or listen to the lewdness that engulfs the world (Matthew 15:19). We do this by staying away from the avenues through which lust invades our hearts and replacing these conduits of sin with aids to righteous hearts and lives (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 2:11). Turn off the filthy television programs, stay away from the lewd movies, don't buy the lurid magazines, and refuse to listen to the dirty music. Try studying your Bible lesson, attending Bible class and worship assembly, praying to the Lord, and singing hymns of praise and edification instead. We must have the courage to preach against this devastating sin (2 Timothy 4:2).

Conclusion

What is the greatest danger our world faces? None is more prevalent or destructive than sexual immorality. "Flee fornication."

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Sin

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Introduction

When a horrible crime has been committed, some bleeding heart is always heard to say, "We can't blame him. He was abused as a child. His was just 'anti-social behavior.'" The poor victim is left high and dry from the flood-tide of sympathy. As the result of such confused thinking, the Bible concept of sin, along with personal responsibility and guilt, has been almost forgotten.

From beginning to end of the Scriptures, sin is a vital subject. Immediately after the first sin, the Lord God pronounced the curses that are its results.

So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel. To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it": cursed is the ground for your sake; 'in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.' Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return (Genesis 3:14-17).

In the concluding chapter of the Bible the apostle John envisions the lifting of the curses in the heavenly home. "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him (Revelation 22:3). Human sin, its tragic consequences, and God's eternal plan for the relief from those results are central to Scripture.

Certainly, then, it is important that you know what the Bible teaches about sin. What does sin mean to you if you are not a Christian?

Definition

What is "sin"? The word "sin" is a translation of the Greek term "hamartia," which means "a failing to hit the mark." Thus, if an archer shot his arrow toward the target but missed, whether the arrow went beyond, fell short, or swerved aside, he would have sinned. Thus, James identifies one who "wanders from the truth" as "a sinner."

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).

The apostle John offers an inspired definition of “sin” by declaring, “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Thus, when one practices that which is in violation of God’s law, he is guilty of sin.

If he practices that which is unauthorized, he sins by going beyond. “Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9, **English Standard Version**).

If he practices, speaks, or even thinks that which is forbidden, thus practicing “unrighteousness” (“*adikia*”: “a deed violating law and justice”), he sins by swerving aside. “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17).

If he fails to do that which God demands, he sins by falling short. “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Who Is Guilty?

Who, then, is guilty of such lawlessness? Some people say infants are born “inherently totally depraved.” This means children are born all bad, or, as the theologians explain, they are born “utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil” (**Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chapter 6, article 4). These theologians assert that children inherit the guilt of Adam’s sin and a fallen nature as the result of Adam’s sin (article 3).

If we inherit Adam’s guilt because we are his descendants, why do we not also inherit Noah’s righteousness, since he also is our forefather? God’s word teaches:

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself (Ezekiel 18:20).

Jesus affirmed the innocence of little children.

Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 19:13-14).

No, children are not guilty of sin. They are pure and innocent.

But, all who are responsible before God for their actions, words, and thoughts “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). It’s not what we inherit but what we do. If you are old enough, sane enough, and intelligent enough to be responsible for what you do, you have sinned.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

Results of Sin

Since you have sinned, what is the result? What are sin’s consequences? Death is the universal result of sin.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’ (Genesis 2:15-17).

“Death” is the result of separation. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). When the spirit is separated from the body, the body dies.

Physical death is a consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve that even innocent babes may suffer, since we are all separated from the tree of life.

Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'— therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24).

But this is not the death of Genesis 2:15-17, for that death happened the very day Adam sinned, yet he lived physically at least 800 years after he sinned. "After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died" (Genesis 5:4-5).

Spiritual death is the result of the soul being separated from God.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Adam died spiritually the very day he sinned. Also, as results of Adam and Eve's sin, the curses were pronounced upon the serpent, the woman, and the man (Genesis 3:14-19). But the most important consequence of sin to remember is that all those who remain in its guilt will spend eternity "in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Salvation from Sin

Surely you wish to escape this awful fate! But how? It is true that the "wages (just reward) of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), but the very same verse also declares, "the gift (that which is freely given) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." God, in His wondrous love and grace provided us an escape from sin's consequences. Jesus Christ is the sacrificial Lamb offered to satisfy the law's demand of death for our sins. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29) It is His blood, shed on the cross, which will remove the guilt of our sins. "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

But how can you contact this blood? The blood of Jesus depicts His violent death for us.

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:9-10).

When you by faith are baptized into Christ, you are baptized into His death, His blood, and you are freed from the guilt of sin.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).

Are you a responsible person? If so, you have sinned. Thus you have eternal spiritual death as your just reward. Will you not come to Christ so that God might freely bestow upon you eternal life?



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