

UPON THE ROCK

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Vol. 9 Issue 4

SEVEN GREAT QUESTIONS

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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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What Think Ye of Christ?

Robert E. Vincent

Jesus was asked many questions during His ministry. Matthew records many of them: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matthew 19:3), "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16), "By what authority doest thou these things?" (Matthew 21:23), "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:17), "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?" (Matthew 22:28), and "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:36).

Matthew also records a great question Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). They answered, "The son of David." Jesus then presented them with the following dilemma: If Christ is the son of David, why did David, by inspiration in Psalm 110:1, call the Christ his Lord? The Pharisees were not able to answer Jesus' question. The answer of course is Christ was the descendant of David, but he was also the Son of God, thus making Him David's Lord. The question "What think ye of Christ" is still pertinent today. What do the scriptures have to say in reference to this? The Word of God reveals what we should and must think of Jesus the Christ.

JESUS IS THE CREATIVE CHRIST

The book of "beginnings" opens with the phrase, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). From the creation of the world, the universe, and man himself, we can clearly see God's "eternal power" and divinity (Romans 1:20). God "made the world and all things therein ... he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things .., in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:24, 25, 28).

The New Testament Reveals that Jesus Christ is the creator of all things. He was "the Word" in the beginning who "was with God" and "was God" (John 1:1). "All things were made by him; and without him

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

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2007 Upon the Rock Lectureship Announcement

February 24,25, 2007

Theme: Our God Is Alive

Topics include:

God Is (Psalm 19:1)

God's Word Shall Not Return Void (Isaiah 55:11)

God So Loved the World (John 3:16)

God Shall Supply All Your Need (Philippians 4:19)

God Bears Our Burdens (Psalm 68:19)

Made In God's Image (Genesis 1:26-27)

God Shall Wipe Away All Tears (Revelation 21:4)

Nothing Separates Us From the Love of God (Romans 8:35-39)

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Begin making plans now to be with us!

was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). The apostle Paul reveals that all things "were created by" Jesus Christ, created "for Him", and continue to be held together by Him (cf. Colossians 1:16, 17). In Christ we can be created anew! "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). My friend, you must be "baptized into Christ" to "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Have you become this new creation?

JESUS IS THE COMPASSIONATE CHRIST

Throughout the Gospel we read of the compassion of Jesus. When the multitudes followed Jesus he "was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14). When the people were hungry, being moved with compassion for them, Jesus miraculously fed them (Cf. Mark 8:2-8). For the leper who begged for cleansing, Jesus "moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him," thus, healing him (Mark 1:40-42).

The great compassion of Christ is seen in His having left Heaven to "seek and save" the lost, you and me! Because of Jesus' great grace and compassion, "though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Do you know Christ's compassion for you?

JESUS IS THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

Jesus was born into the world for the purpose of dying. Throughout His ministry Jesus told His disciples it was necessary for Him to "suffer ... and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21). Regarding His death, Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said, signifying what death He should die" (John 12:32-33). Jesus knew He would die by crucifixion. When the hour came, Jesus willingly went to the cross.

Why did Christ have to suffer and die? Jesus did not die because of any wrong that He had committed. In fact, the Bible says, He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22) even though He "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus suffered and died on the cross for you

and me! It was the “Just One” who died for the “unjust” (I Peter 3:18). The godliest one of all “died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). The sinless One died for the most sinful of men (cf. Romans 5:8). The best friend of God died for the enemies of God (cf. Romans 5:10). Jesus shed His blood for you and me! Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb?

JESUS IS THE CONQUERING CHRIST

During His life on earth Jesus met the devil on the battlefield of temptation. Satan sought to thwart God’s plan of redeeming man by spiritually slaying the Savior with sin. Satan presented our Lord with temptations uniquely suited to Him, but it was to no avail. Each time Christ was tempted He unsheathed the Sword of the Spirit and sent the devil to flight. When Jesus responded to the devil’s temptations with the words “it is written,” He was not referring to the mere writings of men, but to the writings of God. Jesus conquered Satan and sin in His own life, thus, making it possible for us to conquer the devil as well.

While temptation could not destroy the Son of God, Satan thought physical death would do Him in. Little did Satan realize that through dying, the Savior would “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus became flesh for the purpose of dying that He might conquer death. The Father had promised Him if He would lay down His life, He would be given the power to take it again (cf. John 10:17-18). On the third day, the first day of the week, following Jesus’ death on the cross, He arose triumphant over death! “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ... But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:20-21, 57). In Christ “we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). Will you conquer sin in your life?

JESUS IS THE COMMANDING CHRIST

In His final words to His disciples Jesus said, “All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Jesus has all authority to command. While on earth Jesus healed all sickness, cast

God and Christ loved man so much, man should love him back, as John wrote, “We love him because he first loved us” (I John 4:18).

The way Christians show they love Christ is by keeping His commandments. Keeping the commandments of Christ is the second way to avoid betraying Christ. Christ stated, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Christians keep Christ’s commandments by studying the Bible and putting its lessons to work.

One also needs to pray to God for help in facing the world that wants him to betray Christ. James wrote that, “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” and that “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 5:16; 1:5). Christians need to have a good prayer life with God so they can overcome the worlds attempt to make them turn their backs on Christ

Christians need to live their lives so that they can ask “Lord, is it I,” expecting a negative answer. They need to know they would never turn their backs on, or betray Christ unlike Judas, who knew the dark deed he was preparing to do.

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Many times throughout history, men have tried to make Judas out to be a hero, but the Bible paints Judas as an enemy of Christ. Jesus himself called Judas a “devil” (John 6:70) and not clean (John 13:11). Jesus knew that Judas would betray him, but Jesus did not plot with Judas for this to occur. Judas was a villain. Jackson notes,

If Judas Iscariot was really the ‘hero’ of the crucifixion plot, it is uncommonly strange he was unaware of it! ...[H]e confessed ‘I have sinned, in that I betrayed innocent blood’ (24:7). He then ‘hanged himself’ (v.5). In legal circles, a death-bed’ confession is of the strongest caliber. This is hardly the way one acts if he imagines he has just performed one of the most noble deeds of all history! (emp. in original) (3)

Judas was not a hero. When he asked “Rabbi, is it I,” he already knew the answer; he was the betrayer of Christ. While all his motives remain unknown, it is known that what Judas did was wrong.

Today Christians need to ask themselves “Am I betraying Christ?” To betray is to “fail or desert especially in time of need” (Mish 146). It is possible for Christians to betray Christ. Paul informed the Galatians, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). Peter warned, ‘for if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning” (II Peter 2:20). When a Christian turns back to the life he lead before baptism, then he is betraying Christ. This is why Jude encouraged Christians to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3)

If it is possible for a Christian to betray Christ, then he must safeguard himself so that he will not. Jude’s statement to contend for the faith entails many things Christians need to do to be prepared not to betray Christ. First, Christians need to dedicate themselves to Christ. This is done by loving Christ. The love to be had for Christ is the unselfish love that seeks his better before the individual. This is expressed in the Bible by the word *agape*. God “*agaped*” the world so much “that he gave his only begotten Son” to it (John 3:16). Because

out demons, walked on water, and even raised the dead. When He calmed the stormy sea, His disciples marveled, saying, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey Him” (Matthew 8:27). The same Jesus the Jews had crucified, God raised up, and made Him to be “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). He is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). Because He has all authority, salvation is found only in Him (cf. Acts 4:12). He alone is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Jesus commands us to “believe” in Him as the Son of God and Savior (John 8:24). He commands all to “repent” of sin (Luke 13:3). He commands us to “confess” Him “before men” (Matthew 10:32). He also commands all to be “baptized” (Mark 16:16). Upon being “born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5) we must be “faithful unto death” and He will give us “a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). Have you been obedient to the commands of Christ?

Every person must make a judgment regarding Jesus. The question is very personal: “What do YOU think of Christ?” My friend, know that your eternal destiny depends upon your present response to this question!

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By What Authority Doest Thou These Things?

Phil Grear

Jesus was continually challenged by religious leaders who wanted to discredit him. On one occasion, they confronted him with the question, “By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?” (Luke 20:2). Interestingly, Jesus did not rebuke their question. He refused to answer because it was not asked in the right attitude, but it was a fair question, and He did not criticize it.

“By what authority doest thou these things?” Jesus had already answered this question many times. His authority came from God. “For...the Father ..hath given him authority to execute judgment also,

because he is the Son of man” (John 5:26-27). “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28) “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:49-50). There was no reason to repeat this to a group of people who really did not want to hear the answer anyway.

However, they had asked a valid and vital question. All that is done in religion must *have* the authority of the Father behind it. God has never allowed His people just to do whatever they want in religion. Cain learned this when he offered an unauthorized sacrifice to God and it was rejected. “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect” (Genesis 4:3-5). Nadab and Abihu took it upon themselves to “offer strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.” As a result of their presumptuousness “there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” (Leviticus 10:1-2). Jesus said religious practices not authorized by the Father would render our worship vain or empty. “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).

The apostle Paul strongly emphasized this point, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17). To do something “in the name of” is to do it by the authority of. If a man speaks in the name of another he is speaking by the authority of that one. Otherwise he is presuming a privilege that is not rightfully his. Certainly one dare not speak for God without the authority of God behind him. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). If the oracles (words) of God do not say it, then he must not say it either. God has never tolerated men speaking an unauthorized message in His name. “But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded

was the betrayer. The difference in Judas’ question is that he addressed Jesus as “Rabbi,” or teacher, instead of “Lord.” Boles noted, “By this change Judas denied the claim that Jesus was his ‘Lord’” (503).

As they were finishing the meal, Christ stated, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me” (Matthew 26:23). It was the culture of the time that food would be served in a large common bowl. Then each guest would dip his hand or bread into the bowl to receive his food. “In so large a company two or three bowls would be used for convenience sake. The words of Jesus, therefore, limited the circle of accused ones from twelve to four or five” (McGarvey 653). Christ also indicated Judas as the betrayer by answering his question, “You have said it” (Matthew 26:25).

John records that after this conversation occurred, He told Judas “What you do, do quickly,” but the disciples still did not understand what Judas was going to do (John 13:27ff). It has been suggested that the other apostles may have looked up to Judas. It is known that Judas was the treasurer of the *group* (John 13:29). He more than likely gained this responsibility by earning the trust of the other disciples. Judas was also the only apostle from Judea. At this time people in Judea, and many in Galilee, believed that Jews from Judea were of a higher class. Jews in Judea usually had more opportunities to be educated and were thought to be more devout. These facts lead the disciples not to understand that Judas would betray Christ.

Recently, several books have been published about the “Gospel of Judas.” The gospel of Judas is a document from the second century. When it first surfaced, Iraneus labeled it as “fictitious history” (qtd. In Jackson 1). This document, which is categorized with Gnostic writings, portrays Judas as a hero for betraying Christ. It says of Judas that “rather than acting out of greed or malevolence, he was simply following the deceptive ‘plan’ that he and Jesus had prearranged” (Harrub 1). Many are using this document to rewrite history and the Bible. Now that this gospel is resurfacing, some are suggesting that Christ and Judas had a plot for Judas to betray Christ. They then suggest that Judas was the most loyal apostle for being willing to betray Christ.

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Lord, Is It I?

Jack Gilchrist

During the Passover meal that Jesus and His disciples ate right before His crucifixion, Jesus informed His twelve closest disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray me” (Matthew 26:21). Eleven of the exceedingly sorrowful” disciples responded “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). One disciple, Judas, responded, Rabbi, is it I?” (Matthew 26:25).

When Christ stated that one of the disciples would betray him, all but Judas responded by asking if it was he, expecting a negative response (Vincent 138). In other words, each disciple asked, “Surely I am not the one” (Ibid.). The eleven all in turn asked if they were the betrayer, but in a way to show they did not believe they would betray Jesus.

Judas had already decided to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16). His question is worded differently from the others. Judas still asked in a similar way, expecting a negative answer, even though he knew he

him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20).

We must ask this very vital question in connection with all we do in religion. “By what authority doest thou these things?” We dare not presume to teach or practice that which is without authority. Much that is done in the religious world today without the authority of God.

By what authority do men endorse and encourage denominationalism? They certainly do not do so by the authority of God. He never planned for His church to be divided by human doctrines and creeds into hundreds of different and differing bodies. His plan was always to “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10). Only when men ignored the Bible and built religious systems around their own thinking was the church fragmented into various denominations. But God never wanted it so. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). God wanted one church, but man has built hundreds, and definitely without the authority of God.

By what authority do men teach salvation by faith alone? Listening to the religious world as a whole would give the impression it is taught on every page of the Bible. But the exact opposite is true, it is taught nowhere in the Bible. As a matter of fact the phrase “faith alone” is found only in James 2:24 where we read, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” How can something be taught by the authority of God and never be found in the word of God? Without question the Bible clearly teaches we are saved by faith, but it just as clearly teaches that we are saved by obedience. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). If Jesus is the author of salvation to all who obey him, what about those who do not obey him? If we must obey him to receive the salvation he has authored, then salvation is by obedience as well as faith. This is not to say that we earn our salvation by obeying Jesus. Of course no man has the capability of being good enough to earn his way to

heaven. We are saved by the grace of God through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). But we dare not divorce faith from the works of humble obedience that God says display our faith in him.

These are just two of the areas in which we must respect and recognize the authority of God. We are not free to do whatever seems right to us. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). We must accept no practice or teaching until we have asked and answered the question, "By what authority doest thou these things?"

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Jeremy J. Main

Before we provide a Biblical answer to the question, let us acknowledge a few points concerning the question itself. Understand that the question is a Scriptural question. The keeper of the prison in Philippi sincerely said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30)? Unless one would wish to question the credentials of Paul and Silas, we must accept the question as valid (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1; Acts 15:32). It is noteworthy that the gospel preachers did not rebuke the jailor for asking the question, but instead provided an answer to the question based upon the jailor's place in relationship to God. If one were to claim that the question is unscriptural, he must not only reject the credibility of Luke, but also the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). Just as the jailor was under the New Testament, so are we today. Therefore, we may be confident in asking this great question.

Let us examine the question, "what must I do to be saved?" The word "must" does not indicate a suggestion, or a possible course of action, but a command. In order for man to be saved, something is necessary and required. The salvation of man is conditioned upon the fulfillment of this obligation. The verb "do" indicates action in carrying out the commandment. The personal pronoun "I" indicates an

be extremely cautious in the planning and spending of earthly wealth. When wealth begins to squeeze its fingers around peoples' necks, they may begin to find themselves reasoning like the men in this passage and like other materially-minded men Jesus encountered (Mark 10:17-22) and discussed (Luke 12:13-21).

Outside of the context of this passage, there are other applications to be considered when one understands that life is only like a vapor. First, if life is so transient, then one should seek to treat family members with the greatest amount of kindness and appreciation possible. It would do anyone well to put to practice the inspired words of Paul in Colossians 3:18-21 and Ephesians 5:22- 6:4. How many well-intentioned individuals long for just one more opportunity to share time with his or her family members who, like a vapor, have passed from this life? Further, because life is short, treating our spiritual family with love and respect ought to be a paramount priority. Time with our brothers and sisters in Christ on earth is short, but must be spent in love if we hope to find eternal fellowship with them in heaven (1 John 4:7-8, 11, 20; John 13:34- 35). Next, because life is not guaranteed, Christians would be well served to slow down their hectic, non-stop schedules and take more time to find intimacy with God in Bible study and prayer. Unfortunately, too many have crammed their schedules completely with the affairs of this life and simply cannot find time for the Lord (cf., Psalm 42:1-2; James 4:8a). One writer has astutely observed, "We have become a body of people who look more like a herd of cattle in a stampede than a flock of God beside green pastures and still waters" (Swindoll 16).

As one considers the brevity of life, it is touching, thought provoking, and motivational. It must motivate disciples of Jesus today to take advantage of every opportunity we have to serve the Lord, knowing that this short life is of no comparison to the eternity that follows (Romans 8:18). Christians are motivated, as the Tim McGraw song suggests, to "Live Like You Were Dying." May we always be mindful of the challenging question and answer found in James 4:14: "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

An Answer to the Question

Every good question deserves an answer, right? James shoots it straight in his challenging answer: “It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). This reality check reorients the overconfident planner to the way things really are. One’s life is not guaranteed—it is like a vapor that appears for a moment and then is gone. The word translated “vapor” was sometimes used during Bible times to refer to “steam that rises from a pot” (Bauer 149). It also was used “of smoke which the wind carried away and graphically depicts the transience of life” (Rienecker 139). What vivid and explicit language is used here! Moo comments, “The point is clear enough: Human life is insubstantial and transitory, here one minute and gone the next. Illness, accidental death, or the return of Christ could cut short our lives just as quickly as the morning sun dissipates the mist or as a shift in wind direction blows away smoke” (204).

Throughout the Bible, one is reminded of the brevity of life. “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1). “My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass” (Psalm 102:11). “Man is like a breath; His days are like a passing shadow” (Psalm 144:4; cf., James 1:10; 1 Peter 1:24). Far too many have first hand familiarity with this Biblical fact, having experienced the untimely and unexpected deaths of loved ones. In the short time that has passed since this writer graduated high school in 1999, two classmates have been killed in car accidents and another fighting in Iraq. Such real-life happenings remind us that James was pulling no punches in his answer to the grueling question: “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (4:14).

Applications for Today

What does this question and its challenging answer mean to me? Several points of application can be made. First, in the context of James 4, the correct view of the future means taking the Lord’s will into account: “Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that” (James 4:15). In other words, our plans for the future must involve the plans of the Father! Further, Christians must

individual responsibility. While we do not attempt to diminish in any way the divine part in our salvation (e.g. John 3:16), we also understand from this and other passages that man has a part concerning his salvation (et. Philippians 2:12).

In order to answer the question of salvation, we must first determine, “to whom shall we go?” (John 6:68). While some would have gone to the religious scribes, lawyers, and priests for the answer, Peter wisely said to Jesus, “You have the *words of eternal life*” (John 6:68). Salvation is found only in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12). Jesus came into the world to save people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). If we wish to be saved, we will trust and obey the Savior.

The Bible is the word of God. He “has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). In order to determine what we must do to be saved, we need to devote diligent study to the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). In the New Testament, we find steps of salvation. Jesus, the Savior, taught the alien sinner to hear His word (Matthew 7:24-27), believe in Him (John 8:24), repent, (Luke 13:3,5), confess Him (Matthew 10:32-33), and be baptized in His name (Mark 16:16). Jesus encourages the new Christian to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10). This doctrine is taught throughout the New Testament. In the Book of Acts, one may find many examples of conversion.

The Jews on the Day of Pentecost, upon hearing that they were guilty of crucifying the Christ, were cut to the heart. They asked the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do” (Acts 2:37). This was simply another way of saying, “what must we do to be saved.” Their *question of salvation* indicated their *belief* in Christ. Therefore, the apostle said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Upon obedience to the gospel, Christ would remit their sins. Peter continued to preach, “Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40). How did the people react to the gospel? Luke records, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). Therefore, not only are the obedient forgiven of their past sins, but the Lord adds them to His church (Acts 2:47).

In obedience to the Great Commission, Philip the evangelist “went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them” (Acts 8:5), How did the Samaritans react to the gospel of Christ? Luke recorded, “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” (Acts 8:12). The Samaritans were “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16), just as the Jews were in Jerusalem (Acts 2:38).

Later, Philip met a man of Ethiopia. The eunuch was returning from his long trip to Jerusalem to worship God *and* was *reading* from Isaiah 53. Philip took the opportunity to preach Jesus to him from the same Scripture (Acts 8:35). In preaching Jesus, he no doubt taught the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. As they went down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized” (Acts 8:36)?

From his question, it is obvious that the preaching of Christ included baptism. After all, one pictures the death, burial, and resurrection in baptism (Romans 6:1-6). Philip, in answering the eunuch, said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may” (Acts 8:37). The eunuch confessed, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). Therefore, Philip aided the eunuch in his obedience to the gospel by immersing him in water (Acts 8:38-39).

Saul of Tarsus, after being convicted of his sin, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do” (Acts 9:6)? Did the Lord say, Saul, there is nothing for you to do? No, instead the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:6). While waiting for Ananias, Saul prayed (Acts 9:11), yet his sins were not washed away. What was the believing, repentant Saul told he must do? Ananias told Saul, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). How did Saul call on the name of the Lord? He did so by his obedience to the gospel (Romans 10:13-17). One contacts the blood of Christ through baptism (Revelation 1:5).

Cornelius, Lydia, and Crispus are additional Biblical conversions. Cornelius was a man who prayed to God. However, he was still in his sins. An angel of God told Cornelius, Peter “will tell you what you must

As one can see, holiness and godliness effects and affects all that we are and do in this life. Its presence is visible in our worship, and in our daily walk among man. Sadly, some may treat it as a seasonal garment that is put on and off, but this has never been God’s intent regarding faithfulness. May we all seriously consider this matter of “holiness” and “godliness” for truly, Christ will return to honor such souls.

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For What Is Your Life?

Matt Cook

Every year, Americans spend vast amounts of money to have their future predicted. By calling 1-800 numbers or by having their palm read, many are deceived into believing those who claim to predict the future. In the context of the passage under consideration, James deals with Christians who thought they could predict the future, and at that, did not include the Lord in their plans. In James 4:13, he writes, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’ (All Scripture references from the New King James Version). These likely wealthy Christians, to whom James is speaking, confidently and deliberately predicted and planned for the future as if they knew exactly what would happen. The original readers of this short letter would have certainly been familiar with traveling merchants who traveled throughout the Mediterranean region with the goal of financial gain. Although financial gain is not sinful, the over confident attitude of the hypothetical speaker does penetrate the realm of sin, and for that matter, silliness. James continues, “whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow” (4:14). To plan in such a way without including the Lord is insensible, James says, for no one knows what will happen on the next day. Then, the profound question is asked: “For what is your life?” (James 4:14). In the following, we want to show the answer to this question and some application points for modern believers.

Peter explains to the suffering servants in his first letter exactly what holiness looks like. In order for one to become holy and godly vessels for Christ, they must first obey the truth. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth... Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:22-23). It is this same word that calls one unto repentance and baptism (1 Peter 3:21; 2 Peter 3:9). A wonderful exchange occurs with such an obedient soul. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The obedient one takes on God's righteousness in Christ, and Christ takes on participant's sins.

Of course obedience does not end at baptism; rather it marks the beginning of a long life of faithful service unto God, this constitutes "holiness" and "godliness." Spiritually speaking, one becomes a spiritual being. "You also as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Peter identifies the Christian as one who is "spiritual" and "holy." Remember it was Paul who rebuked the saints in Corinth for being carnally minded (1 Corinthians 3:1). Their minds were not set on things above, but rather on earthly aspirations and passions (Colossians 3:2). Such is critical for any child of God to be pleasing in His sight. The convert is no longer conformed unto the world, but rather transformed into the divine likeness of Christ (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Peter 1:4).

When the mind changes, then the behavior of man follows close behind. That is why we see Peter instructing Christians how to conduct their affairs in this present world. He addressed many aspects about many relationships. For example, how wives are to conduct themselves among their husbands, and how husbands were to conduct themselves among their wives (1 Peter 3:1-7). How Christians are to be obedient and submissive servants unto political heads (1 Peter 2:13-17). How servants were to be submissive unto their masters (1 Peter 2:18). How the elders and elderly were to treat the youth, and the youth regard and treat the elderly (1 Peter 5:1-7). And certainly, how all Christians were to treat all of man kind to the glory of God (1 Peter 2:9-10, 17; 3:15-16).

do" (Acts 10:6). What was the commandment for Cornelius and the other believing Gentiles? Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). Lydia was a woman who worshiped God. However, upon believing the word spoken by Paul, "she and her household were baptized" (Acts 16:14-15). It is clear that she was faithful to the Lord by her obedience (Acts 16:15). Later we learn how a ruler by the name of Crispus and many Corinthians became Christians. What did they do? Luke recorded, "And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

As we conclude, let us look at the answer to the jailor's question. The jailor of Philippi was a heathen. He complied with the unjust punishment and imprisonment of Paul and Silas. Later that night while he slept, a "great earthquake" awakened the jailor (Acts 16:26). After seeing that the prison doors were open, he feared that the prisoners had fled. When he was about to kill himself, Paul cried out, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here" (Acts 16:28). In effect, the prisoners had just saved the jailor's life. He now desired "the way of salvation" which they preached (Acts 16:17). He said, "what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Understanding that the prisoner was not a believer of Christ, they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). However, before he could believe, he first had to hear the word (Acts 16:32). The same hour of the night, the jailor penitently washed their stripes, and immediately he was baptized (Acts 16:33).

How will you respond to the question "What must I do to be saved?" While faith is important, obedience is also necessary (James 2:20). Before Jesus may save you from your sins, you must first humbly submit yourself to Him. While God desires the salvation of all (1 Timothy 2:4), it is a sad fact that not all will be saved (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

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Is Christ Divided?

1 Corinthians 1:13

Keith G. Ball

When I was a boy, I was fascinated to learn that the simple earthworm could be cut in two and that the two segments could survive and in fact, become new earthworms. I have, of course, learned since that time that this is not true. If you segment an earthworm into two pieces, what you end up with is two pieces of a dead earthworm. This simple truth applies to all animals in the animal kingdom. Neither man nor animal can grow a new arm, leg, or head if these members are severed from the body. Instead, severe bodily injury is the result.

There is a body that is far more glorious than our physical one yet remains simple in design and complex in nature. This body is the body of Christ. It is unfortunate that many carelessly think that they can divide the body of Christ and that the body will suffer no ill effect. When we speak of the body of Christ, we understand that the physical body of flesh and blood died on the cross so that the glorious spiritual body might be established. That glorious spiritual body that was established is the church. "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22,23). This body, the church, is not to be segmented and divided! Any time man assaults the body of Christ, damage results. This damage can primarily be seen when man drives himself further away 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) It is this writer's conclusion that there are primarily two reasons why attempts are made (knowingly or unknowingly) to divide the body of Christ. The first reason is a lack of respect for the scriptures and God's plan for the Church. The second is pride. The Corinthian church had many problems; one of which was discord and division. In order to restore these relationships, Paul lovingly used logic and reasoning that, if heeded, would bring about healing within the body. It appears that some of the brethren had developed an *unnatural* sense of "preacher loyalty" because they wanted to be recognized by the one who had baptized them or their

True to Peter's form, he supplies the answer to the question under consideration, "What manner of persons ought you to be?" for the rest of the passage reads, "...in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11). In the immediate context Peter has a hopeful heart and a watchful eye on the Lord's return. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (2 Peter 3:10). He then urges the saints to be, "Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God (2 Peter 3:12). Regardless of the belief or disbelief of some, Jesus will return again. By the power of God's word that first formed, and then flooded this world, He promises to destroy it again with the return of His Son. Since we hold these things to be true, we must be faithful unto God in all our affairs, looking for, and yes, even urging for the coming of Christ!

It sounds simple enough, but just what does a holy and godly person look like? How do they behave? What do they do? We must be eternally grateful for the Holy Spirit supplied abundant "knowledge" regarding these matters. Peter was a man of great detail, and we can see as much in his two letters, First and Second Peter. What else should we expect from a man who spoke whatever came to his mind?

In Peter's first letter to the elect, he offers words of comfort to the suffering by way of various trials. He urges them to remain faithful until the very end, the salvation of their souls (1 Peter 1:6-9). He will even quote Jehovah, "Be holy for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15). What a standard for one to be measured by, i.e. God Almighty. As a matter of fact, Peter continues to use God and Jesus Christ as a believers' ultimate standard. He would remind the servants of this very thing, "...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow in His footsteps" (1 Peter 2:21). It is the apostle Paul who reminds all servants of such a calling. "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ has also loved us and given Himself for us" (Ephesians 5:1-2). It was Jesus washing His disciples' feet just hours before His betrayal when He explains the meaning, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15). As John chapter thirteen comes to an end, He reminds His beloved, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). Friend, the bar has been raised high regarding our holiness and godliness.

be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20,21).

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What Manner of Persons Ought Ye To Be?

Scott Spencer

As one explores all of the great questions found in the Bible, the question regarding how one should live for God is certainly of utmost importance. The apostle Peter explores such a question when he writes, “therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be..” (2 Peter 3:11). The Bible has a lot to offer us regarding this matter. We can be certain that God has not only addressed this matter regarding a Christian’s conduct, but all matters pertaining to holiness and godliness. “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him...” (2 Peter 1:3).

God has supplied the answers to man’s questions, and they are found in His holy word. It is this same word and the promises associated with it that brings about much criticism. Scoffers will scoff saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:4). Peter then turns his attention to the Word of God saying, “For this they willfully forget that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word are reserved for fire... The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:5-9). One would be wise to conclude that since God is not slack concerning His promises, and He makes good on His judgments, one should equally consider the severity of that same word regarding holy living.

favorite evangelist. In 1 Corinthians 1:13, Paul asks them a most important rhetorical question. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? These brethren, if they were conscientious of what they needed to do, would have said, “no, Christ is not divided, no, I was not baptized in the name of Paul, I was baptized in the name of Christ.” The conscientious Christians at Corinth would then have dropped their personal preferences and would have forsaken their allegiances to Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. We see something akin to this in Acts 14 when Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra. After healing a crippled man, the people cried out, “...The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” When Paul and Barnabas learned of this and learned that the people intended to sacrifice oxen to them, they were barely able to dissuade them from their course.

Is this a problem today? Absolutely! It may not necessarily be problematic to the same degree that Paul and his co-workers saw, yet it is nonetheless to be found within the body of Christ today. There are many variables as to why and how the church is divided, but it all comes back to the two primary reasons for division and that is; lack of respect for authority and pride. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas could have enjoyed the “spotlight” and allowed the brethren to, in essence, deify them. This would have brought much displeasure to God and would have placed the souls of these men in jeopardy. How many times, since the first century, have similar events occurred and preachers, because of pride, have welcomed the “spotlight” and attention? How many congregations have been divided because a group of loyalists to a particular man have encouraged him to start a new congregation that meets in the home of one of the dissenters? With these situations, the pride and ego of the preacher are caressed and he fails to encourage the brethren to remain with the congregation from which he is departing.

In the context of 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul tries to get the brethren to see the error of their ways. There is little doubt that pride was an issue at Corinth. We support this by noting the many uses of the personal pronoun “I” in their speech. Augustine, the renowned Christian philosopher who lived in the 4th century, is noted for once having said, “Should you ask me: What is the first thing in religion? I should reply: the first, second, and third things therein is humility.” Humility and respect for the sacred church that Jesus built will indeed

go a long way toward keeping the body of Christ united. When we have brotherly love for one another and prefer one another (Romans 12:10) then we will be well on our way to overcoming many of the things that divide us. In similar fashion, Paul says to the Philippian brethren, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Philippians 2:3). One of the paradoxes of Christianity is that if one wants to be great in the eyes of God, he must humbly be a servant to others. "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11,12). When one has an inflated estimation of oneself, then peace and unity are in eminent peril and will soon be lost.

In our text of 1 Corinthians chapter 1, Paul says in verse 10 "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Paul had urged them to "speak the same thing." This would be consistently speaking the sound doctrine of God's word. In 1 Peter 4:11, Peter insists "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.." Assuredly, there would not exist the divisions today if only man would look to God's word for authority, and then not go beyond nor shrink from what is written. When Paul spoke of the brethren being divided, he used the Greek word *schisma*, which means "to rent" as in a ragged garment or net being torn. This indicates how dangerous things had been allowed to become with the church at Corinth. Yet Paul gives them the good news that they can be "perfectly joined." He uses the Greek *katartizo*, which is the same word used in Mark 1:19 for the mending of fishing nets. This word was also used as a medical term for resetting broken or dislocated bones. The Corinthian church needed to busy themselves with repairing the fractures and holes in their fellowship, not only with one another but with the Lord. This would be possible if they returned to God's word and followed His prescription for humility and servitude. Today, if man would only follow the same prescription, we would not see the divisions and assaults upon the body of Christ. Division does so much harm to the cause of Christ. Let us join with our Savior as we pray for unity as He sought it. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may (continued on page 16)

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