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The September–October issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* consists of articles primarily intended to introduce Christ to our friends and to remind readers of His greatness and glory. We have articles from a few who write regularly for the paper and an article from a first-time writer as well.

In this issue we have Jeff Archey writing for the first time in the *Gospel Gleaner*. Jeff is the voice of the International Gospel Hour. IGH has been a work of the West Fayetteville congregation for 25 years or so. The program is one of the oldest continually running religious broadcasts in America, and Jeff is doing a great job in a great work.

The remaining contributors to this issue have written for the *Gleaner* before. You will find their articles to be on par with previous works, which is to say *outstanding!* I appreciate these men and their willingness to teach you (and me) through their writings. None of these men are paid for their work with the *Gleaner*. It is truly a labor of love, and we appreciate them for it.

We pray this issue will help every reader grow in God's grace and knowledge. What a topic! It does not get any better than the love of God manifested in the Son of God. May we each be encouraged to love the Lord, His word, and His church!

Our Need for Christ

Ronald Bryant

We need Christ! In every aspect that need is greater than all our other needs. Individually and collectively, as followers of Christ, we stand in constant need of Him. As His followers, we stand in real need of His love and mercy and of His wisdom and power. We stand in need of His strength and understanding. We stand in need of what He alone can supply.

Preachers Need Christ

Each preacher of the gospel of Christ, and everyone who labors to teach God's word, stands in need of Christ. Each one stands in need of His guidance and strength. Each one stands in need of His influence and assurance. Each one stands in need of His example and honor. Each exists to proclaim and exalt Him, to labor to lead eternal souls to Him. Each is a servant of Christ and is ruled by uncompromising faith in Him and love for Him. Each is privileged to be humbled by this need of Him. That need is real and is to be a compelling force.

Paul wrote of the necessity that he faced as a proclaimer of Christ. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). He instructed Timothy of the great necessity of preaching the word (2 Tim. 4:2). He spoke eloquently of the manner of his life, stating, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). He knew his

need of Christ. Yet, how many preachers are ruled by their need of Christ?

Elders Need Christ

Each elder in the Lord's church stands in need of Christ. The elders stand as the shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28). They watch for souls (Heb. 13:17). In every aspect of their role and each decision made, they look to the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-5). He is their guide, and they know their need of Him. They are ruled by their need of Christ. He is their Lord, and they are His blessed servants. They need Him, for He is their Lord and their only hope.

He is, therefore, central in their thinking and in their labors. They need to follow Christ that they may lead others to Him. It is as they realize their need of Christ that they are enabled to serve the flock over which they are overseers. They lead others in service and labor to equip them for greater service. How many elders give prayerful attention to their need of Christ?

Deacons Need Christ

Every deacon is an honored servant. Each one stands in need of Christ. Each is to be ruled by his own personal need of Christ. They are men of God, called of God to serve in the local congregation. They serve Him and seek to honor Him. In reality, they serve Him as they

serve others—as they see to the needs of the congregation (study Acts 6:1-6). They need Christ to help them do their various labors and as they fulfill their role in the body. They need Christ to guide and encourage them, as they follow His example—“He went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). They are privileged to love the church as did Christ. They are ruled by the fact that He has called them to be His servants. How many deacons give careful attention to their personal need of Christ?

Fathers Need Christ

Each father stands in need of Christ. Each father stands in need of being ruled by the fact that his family belongs to Christ. As a father, one has the perfect example and guide—his heavenly Father.

Through faith and adoration of Christ, a father can fulfill his role to bring his children up in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4). Each father is enabled to find the help he needs in fulfilling his role to lead his family in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.” He is thus enabled to provide for and protect his family and to be the head that the Lord desires (Eph. 5:23ff.).

With Christ as his Lord, Savior, friend, and guide, he can confess his need of Christ. He can also know the great blessing that is his as a father. How many fathers prayerfully consider their need of Christ?

Mothers Need Christ

Each mother stands in need of Christ. The role of each mother is ruled by the example of Christ. His love and kindness, His strength and holy purpose stand as a constant guide.

He alone can equip and lead them in the tremendous role of mother. Children are a gift from God. He is the author of life, and He is the author of life in the family. Each child is an eternal soul. The rearing of each child in the family is the duty of husband and wife. Each is called upon to fulfill their role. Who can properly estimate the role of a godly mother in the molding of a child? The tenderness and care of each mother is vital to the honoring of God. The role of mother is central to God’s plan. The mother’s need of Christ is a stabilizing force. How many mothers give attention to their need of Christ?

Children Need Christ

Each child needs Christ. He is to be central in the life of each child. It is in His character that a child can find and embrace one’s role in life. The exalted place that Christ is to secure in the heart of each person is the place that is to receive the greatest attention.

Each child needs to know Christ as He is revealed in the Bible. Each child needs to know the love and compassion of Christ, and His constancy as Lord and Savior. Children need to be molded in a home life that is ruled by prayer and praise, joy and peace. That

which Christ supplies is the great need of each child. How great is that need?

Churches Need Christ

Each local congregation needs Christ. He is needed not simply as a subject for sermons or lessons, but as Savior and Lord. The need to worship and serve Him, to exalt His name, and to love and know Him each day is the heartbeat of the church.

The congregation that is ruled by an awareness of Christ, and by the desire to simply know and honor Him, will be a light in its community and beyond. It is in hungering and thirsting after righteousness that a congregation is enabled to grow and can then serve as did Christ. No matter the number in attendance, the focus is specific; it is the real need for Christ that is to prevail.

Prophecies Foretelling Christ

John T. Polk II

“For [1] we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. [2] For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. [3] And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; [4] knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:16-21). (The numbers in brackets were added for clarity in this article.)

The Accuracy of Scripture

Neither the Old Testament prophecies nor their fulfillment were made-up “myths.” “Fables,” or “myths,” carries the idea of tales, stories, lore, etc. People who make allegorical applications of miracles or fulfilled prophecies disqualify themselves as “disciples” of God’s word.

Jesus’ question to the Sadducees: “Have you not read in the book of Moses?” (Mark 12:26) must be answered with “Absolutely not!” Likewise, only those ignorant of the New Testament can be easily misled. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness” (2 Timothy 2:15-16).

Peter repeats his eyewitness account of Jesus’ transfiguration

(Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36). He saw Jesus receive “the honor and glory” from “God the Father” to become “His Majesty.” He heard “the Excellent Glory” say, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Both sight and sound were accurately recorded in Scripture, and Peter is leaving “a reminder of these things after my decease” (2 Peter 1:15).

Peter, James, and John witnessed this transfiguration, so John later could write: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3).

These are God-inspired, Holy Spirit-controlled, written records of this event in the life of Christ. If this is an accurately recorded event, then there is no reason, whatsoever, to doubt that every other fact of Jesus’ life has also been precisely written and preserved by the Holy Spirit.

This is God’s pattern for showing fulfillment of Bible prophecies. “And so” is saying, “after this manner,” or “following this procedure.” The New Testament documents give facts which

confirm Old Testament prophecies. With the “prophetic word confirmed,” it is as clear as light shining through darkness, or of the day star of dawn. We would use the expression “a light of understanding has turned on in our minds.”

It is distressing to see millions misled from prophetic accuracy by ignoring the clear fulfillment in the New Testament! God knew what His prophecies meant and what, exactly, was their fulfillment. Therefore, only the fulfillment interprets the prophecy!

Prophecies Fulfilled in Christ

Here are a few of the hundreds of prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ:

1) God promised Abraham: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:18). The New Testament interpretation is: “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). “And so” we have another “prophetic word confirmed.”

2) God said through David: “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10). In the New Testament, Peter preached: “For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption...Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the

fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:27, 30-32).

Peter and the apostles personally witnessed the fulfillment of God’s prophecy through David in the Old Testament, “and so” we have another “prophetic word confirmed.” The New Testament begins with the book of Matthew, which freely quotes Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment(s), and the church of Christ began on Pentecost preaching prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ!

3) God said through Isaiah: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

The New Testament records: “So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, “God with us” (Matthew 1:22-23).

God promised the virgin birth of Christ through Isaiah and noted its fulfillment through Matthew. Never were the conditions given in Isaiah fully met nor identified by God as applying to any other persons before this virgin,

Mary, and her baby, Jesus. Therefore “Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us” has never applied to anyone other than this Jesus (Matthew 1:23). “And so” we have another “prophetic word confirmed.”

4) Therefore, “No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.” Actually, “interpretation” refers to “opening the meaning,” and since “prophecy never came by the will of man,” (i.e., humans were not left to their own imagination or literary devices), then the only other source of Bible information is from “holy men of God [who] spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Since God knew ahead of time what would happen and He moved prophets to accurately record it (Old Testament), then He inspired men who accurately revealed the events (New Testament) which fulfilled, or completely met, the details in those prophecies. “And so” we have all “prophetic word[s] confirmed.”

Conclusion

Seeing that Bible “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17), it is essential that we “may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:2). Don’t ever listen to those who preach “unfulfilled prophecies” because they do not have God’s knowledge to make the proper application.

The Birth of Christ

Billy Lambert

“And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). No life has so radically changed civilization as the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave us a new way of calculating time. He stands between BC and AD. We date our letters from the time of His birth.

Literature has been enriched because of the life of Jesus Christ. The art of the world would have been poorer had Jesus not lived. The status of women has been elevated because Jesus Christ came into this world. And yet Jesus Christ never traveled very far from His home. He never ran for political office. He never wrote a book. He never made investments on Wall Street. He never hit a home run. He never starred in a movie. He never made a touchdown. Yet Jesus Christ stands out as the greatest person ever to live on this earth.

Born of a Virgin

We have a virgin-born Savior. His birth was divinely predicted. Isaiah prophesied, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14, NKJV). Let’s look at the fulfillment of the prophecy. Matthew says, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His

name Immanuel, which is translated ‘God with us’” (1:23).

Virgin born. Born of woman. Conceived by the Holy Spirit without the seed of man. The birth of Christ, the coming forth out of His mother’s womb, was a natural birth. The miraculous part of His journey was the conception. And Jesus Christ was that seed of woman (Galatians 4:4).

The Old Testament on the Virgin Birth

The first mention of the birth of Christ is Genesis 3:15. The Lord said, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

This was God’s formal declaration of war on Satan and sin. It would be through the seed of woman, without the seed or agency of man, that God would bring a redeemer into the world to save men from sin. Notice, “It shall bruise thy head.” If you want to deal a deadly blow to a snake, hit him on the head. Jesus dealt that deadly blow by dying on the cross, rising from the dead, and being seated at God’s right hand (Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:18-22). Metaphorically, Jesus’ heel was bruised when He died on the cross. It was not a deadly blow because He was

raised from the dead, declaring Him to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4).

Isaiah prophesied of the virgin birth of Christ. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14, KJV).

Looking at the context of this prophecy, one should clearly see that the prophet was directing his attention to “the house of David,” not Ahaz. A sign that the house of David “would survive” was the virgin birth (in the future) of a child from the house of David (Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:1-17). God's people would survive the current attack against them.

Jeremiah predicted Jesus's birth. “The Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man” (Jeremiah 31:22). How could this be a “new” thing? Women have been compassing (encircles a man, ESV) men since the beginning of time. The thing that would be “new” is that a woman would have a male child without the seed of man, hence a virgin conception. This is unprecedented.

The prophet Micah predicted the birthplace of Jesus: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

New Testament on the Virgin Birth

Matthew, after writing about the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1), gives a detailed account of Jesus' birth (vv. 18-25). Jesus' birth was the most important birth in human history. Never before has the Godhead taken upon himself human flesh to live among men (Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus was God in the flesh (1Timothy 3:16). “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

Things Known and Unknown to Man

There are circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ about which we know nothing. Some wonderful things have been revealed, and we should want to know every one of those revealed truths. But some things are not revealed (Deuteronomy 29:29).

For example, there is not one syllable in the Bible about the time of Jesus' birth. From Matthew 2:1 and following, we know he was born during the reign of Herod the Great. We know Herod died in 4 BC. In AD 354, Pope Julius of Rome set the 25th day of December as the day of Christ's birth. We do not have one word in the New Testament as to the day or month Jesus was born. December 25th may be a time of family gatherings and the like, but it is not a day God set aside for us to honor Jesus' birth. We honor him every Lord's Day by partaking of the

Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20-30).

Jesus fulfilled every prophecy made in the Old Testament (Luke 24:44). That includes those predictions about His virgin birth. His birth was like all other births, but the one thing different about Jesus was the conception. He was conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-35). It was a miraculous conception, conceived in

the womb of a virgin without the seed of man.

Jesus was not born into the world with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was not born with an iPad in one hand and an iPhone in the other. He did not have a set of keys to a new car. He was born in a stable. But he was born at the right time, the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4), to become the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14).

The Acts of Christ

Bradley S. Cobb

A miraculous birth, an escape to Egypt, and then nothing until 12-year-old Jesus is sitting in the temple, amazing professional Torah teachers with His questions and answers. Then another 18 years of silence before He shows up (like hundreds or thousands of others) in the wilderness to be baptized by John. From that point onward, Jesus' life is a 3-year highlight reel.

Miracles that boggle the mind. Teachings that challenge the soul. Confrontations that silenced and frustrated His foes. Interactions that gave hope to the hopeless. And all that before His momentous, soul-saving act of mercy, grace, and love on the cross.

Four biographies exist, written by friends, witnesses, and a first-century research historian with an eye for

detail. But the closing words of one biography are, "Jesus did many other things which are not written in this book, and were they written in detail, I suppose the world itself would not contain the books" (John 20:30, 21:25).¹

Unfortunately, many focus and speculate far too much on those things which were not written. They want "lost sayings" of Jesus, or extra "gospels." They ignore that what God has preserved is what He decided we need for "life and godliness."

Outside of His death on the cross (which cannot in any way be over-emphasized), His actions as He walked this earth are (to me) the most informative parts of the gospel. He taught people, but more than teaching theological facts, Jesus lived in such a way that

¹ Translations are the author's own.

points the way heavenward. If you don't understand His teaching on "eat my body" (John 6), or "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24), you can still examine His life and know the way to the Father.

"How To"

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the way—not just the road to the Father (the Greek word for "way" is *rhodos*, from which we get the word "road") but the example of how to get there. Paul addresses this in Philipians 2.

Jesus' life shows us how to deal with temptation: recognize the temptation, know the Scriptures, submit to God's will (Matthew 4).

Jesus' life shows us how to deal with stress: share it with good friends and pray (Matthew 26:36-39).

Jesus' life shows us how to prepare for important decisions: take time to pray alone (Luke 6:12-13).

Jesus' life shows us various ways of teaching: proclaiming plain doctrinal truth, dealing with practical life issues, exposing false teachers, exposition of texts, teaching through stories, showing the love of God through actions (this throughout the gospel accounts).

Jesus' life shows what submission to the Father looks like: following Him, even when you don't want to (Luke 22:42); trusting Him when temptation seems overwhelming

(Matthew 4:2-4); keeping on, even when people don't care (John 6:66); willing to endure humiliation because the reward is worth it (Hebrews 12:2).

"How Not To"

Perhaps, given the political climate of the past decade, one aspect that needs to be stressed even more is that Jesus' life exemplifies how not to show favoritism. He was close friends with government workers and anti-government activists (Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot).

He took compassion on those whose contagious disease meant they were supposed to be quarantined (the lepers). He was willing to publicly point out problems with both political parties (Pharisees and Sadducees).

He called out those in sexual sin, but urged them to repent—when the culture said to simply condemn them (John 4:16-18; 8:1-11). He submitted to the actions and rulings of the government, even when they were unjust (see His crucifixion), but he also had no issue calling out political leaders for who they were (Luke 13:31-32). He interacted with His own people (the Jews) as well as those despised groups, such as the Samaritans (basically red-headed step-Jews) and full-fledged Gentiles (often called "the heathen").

The Love of God in Action

Jesus wanted everyone to see the love of God in action. Jesus expressed that love in different ways. For some, He shed tears of compassion (John

11:35-36). For others, He exposed the parts of their lives that kept them from true communion with God (Mark 10:21). For still others, He showed the radical meaning of forgiveness (Luke 23:34). And to the whole world (yet spoken to His closest friends), He called them “friends” (John 15:13).

And though the Father is called the “God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3) and the Holy Spirit is called the “Comforter” (John 14:16, KJV), Jesus’ life shows that He too is a comforter. When His message stresses out His disciples, He says, “Take courage” (John 16:16-33, NASB).

When John is so frightened that he falls down as though he was dead, Jesus puts His hand on him and says, “Do not be afraid” (Revelation 1:17). After hearing Satan wants to sift him like wheat, Peter is comforted by Jesus

with the words, “But I have prayed for you” (Luke 22:31-32).

With each of these events, we have an example to follow. We should comfort others through encouragement, compassion, and prayer (and letting them know you’ve prayed for them). We should show the love of God through compassion, through correction, through forgiveness. We should show the world that everyone is important to God, and thus to us, by refusing to neglect or write people off because of their social, racial, political, cultural, or sexual backgrounds.

Like Jesus, we must never back away from calling out sin (even if it isn’t culturally popular), but do it because we desperately want people to repent and find the forgiveness that comes through Jesus Christ. It is no wonder that Jesus frequently said, “Follow me.”



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The Cross of Christ

Jeff Archey

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

It is humbling to speak of the only death that alters and affects every man. Without the cross of Christ, mankind would have no hope. It is staggering how there were those in Corinth who considered the message of the cross “foolishness.” Some thought it foolish that Jesus did not prevent His death. How could one put trust in One who could not cease what was happening to Him? Of course, we know that He could cease His death—such as stated in the garden (Mt. 26:53-54). He died for us on that cross because we needed a Savior (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:6-10).

The Message of the Cross

Indeed, the message of the cross is the power of God embraced within the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Of great interest and blessing is the phrase from 1 Cor. 1:18, “To us who are being saved.” This phrase is expressed as active or a present state (Eph. 2:5; Rom. 13:11; Col. 1:23). In other words, that powerful message of Christ moves the saved onward with redemption (Eph. 1:7; 1 Jn. 1:7) and peace (Col. 1:20).

When Mr. Lee Strobel was researching for his book *The Case for*

Faith, he came across a statement that is profound: “God took the very worst thing that has ever happened in the history of the universe...the death of God on the cross—and turned it into the very best thing that has happened in history of universe: the opening up of heaven to all who follow Him.” Friends, that *is* profound. Again, without the cross of Christ, there is no hope.

Let us return to that hill of Calvary and see Christ upon His cross. I introduce to you the Savior of the world and ask you to consider what Jesus saw from His cross.

The Scenes from the Cross

When Jesus looked *up*, He addressed the Father. “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots” (Lk. 23:34). The *Pulpit Commentary* says, “This statement was made while the nails were driven in His hand.” History states that many crucified would curse their parents, the executioners...some of those crucified were so vile they had their tongues pulled out by the roots. One must acknowledge the prayer of strength—what strength and forbearance!

Jesus also said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mt. 27:46) Because of His human suffering

and because of His physical weakness, He cried out. And finally, before His last physical breath was taken, Christ said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lk. 23:46).

Looking from the cross, *He saw the need of forgiveness and obedience* for all of mankind. In John 12:32, we read, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

When Jesus looked *down*, He also addressed a number of people. Through prayer, He addressed the very soldiers that drove the nails, lifted the cross, and then cast lots for His garments that He wore to the cross (Lk. 23:34). He looked at His mother with care and concern. After speaking to her, He spoke to John, the disciple whom He loved (Jn. 19:26-27). All are words of compassion from the Christ during the most excruciating pain and horrific suffering. Looking from the cross, *He saw a need for compassion* for all of mankind.

When Jesus looked to the *side*, He addressed the convicted criminals. In Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts, we find those crucified with Christ speaking against Christ. “The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth” (Mt. 27:44). “And they that were crucified with him reviled him” (Mk. 15:32). But as time passed, we see a change in one of the criminals. His statement unto Jesus speaks volumes: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Lk. 23:42).

Quite simply, this man changed. He surrendered to Christ; for the life he lived brought him death, but he turned to the One that could give him light! Looking from the cross, Jesus reminds us of the *need of hope* for all of mankind.

When Jesus looked *outward*, He saw Jerusalem. Christ had great compassion for Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37); in His ministry, as He came near, He wept over the city (Lk. 19:41-44). The Scriptures simply state that Jesus’ crucifixion took place outside the city of Jerusalem, though it was near it (Jn. 19:20; Heb. 13:12). Jewish law did not permit executions and burials inside the city.

Looking from the cross, Jesus saw where His commission of *preaching the gospel* would begin. “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk. 24:47). In Acts 2, what a wonderful day as the gospel was preached and would go onward from Jerusalem to the effect that the gospel was “preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 1:23).

When Jesus looked *inward*, He saw our sins. Within the beautiful prophecy of Isaiah 53, we see He is the One that would bear “our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (v. 4). “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him” (v. 5). “The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of

us all” (v. 6). “For the transgressions of My people He was stricken” (v. 8). “You make His soul an offering for sin” (v. 10). “And He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (v. 12).

In the New Testament, Paul declared that God made Christ “who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). In 1 John 3:5, John stated near the end of the text that “in Him is no sin.”

It is said that in Rembrandt’s painting of the crucifixion, he painted himself in the picture at the foot of the cross. Rembrandt knew that Jesus was crucified by the sin of the world and

that, in relation to the events of the cross, we are all guilty. Looking from the cross, Jesus saw *the sins of the world* and knew He was the ultimate sacrifice.

Meet Him at the Cross

In introducing one to Christ, one must meet the Savior at the cross where the power of God through forgiveness and obedience is found. One will see from the cross the greatest compassion and hope expressed through the gospel message for our sins. *Come* to His cross and obey His will, and if you have done so, *continue* to cleave to the cross and embrace the salvation found only in Christ (Acts 4:12).

The Resurrection of Christ

Jackson Erwin

The resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian religion. It is upon that one event that everything in the church of our Lord either stands or falls. The Deity of Christ, the inspiration of Scripture, the validity of the apostles’ testimonies, and the gospel itself are rooted in the doctrine of Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

Rex Turner, in his work *Biblical Theology*, described the Lord’s resurrection as “the crowning miracle.” He wrote, “Everything that is implied in

the term Christian, and everything that the experience of being a Christian contemplates, has its foundation in the fact of the miraculous resurrection of Christ...If Christ arose from the dead, all other miracles will be freely admitted; and all that is claimed for Christ will be granted. His resurrection is the crowning miracle, the very foundation of the Christian faith.”¹

The most comprehensive passage in all Scripture surrounding this subject is 1 Corinthians 15. In it, the apostle Paul

¹ Rex Turner, Sr., *Biblical Theology* (Don Shackelford, Ed.) (Montgomery: Amridge University Press, 2010), 274.

corrects the church at Corinth for their lack of faith in a future and final resurrection. He argues that without it, they have believed in vain (vv. 12-19). Then Paul discusses how Christians will share in a resurrection like Christ's (vv. 20-23) and enjoy the riches of His presence forever in their new spiritual bodies (vv. 35-58). From this chapter, we will glean two points concerning the resurrection of Christ. We will see 1) the importance of the resurrection and 2) the nature of the resurrection.

The Importance of the Resurrection

Given the fact that Paul wrote, "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:14), one can rightly see that the apostles were not ones to downplay the significance of Jesus being raised from the dead. This is because the resurrection was God's sign of approval in what Christ taught and claimed to be. God does not exalt blasphemers. He will not allow false prophets to partake in the victory march on the last day. Therefore, the very idea that God Almighty, who gives life and takes it away (Job 1:21), would breathe life into someone who falsely claimed to be Deity is ludicrous.

The resurrection *was the ultimate sign that Jesus was who He said He was—God in the flesh*. Had He simply been crucified as a blasphemer (Matt. 26:64-65), a rebel (Matt. 27:11-12; Luke 23:2), a glutton, or a drunkard (Matt. 11:19), then He would have died

under the label of a false prophet, and His religion would have died with Him. Additionally, if He were *any of those things*, God would never allow such a person to be risen from the dead—thus validating His heresies. The fact that He did demonstrates that His message was true and that He truly was Divine.

A second reason the resurrection was important was that *it brought His disciples back from a place of unbelief and doubt to one of faith and obedience*. Before His arrest, the Lord foretold that after His betrayal the disciples would be scattered. Quoting from Zechariah 13:7, He said, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered'" (Matt. 26:31). Thereafter, they "all left him and fled" (Mark 14:50).

Peter denied knowing Christ three times and Thomas doubted the disciples when they claimed to have seen the risen Savior (John 20:24-25). When Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, the eleven refused to believe her (Mark 16:9-11). Had it not been for the resurrection, they would have lived the rest of their lives in sorrow, grief, and mourning. Perhaps some would have questioned whether Jesus was truly the Messiah. Certainly, they would not have spent their lives preaching that He was the Christ—being beaten, tortured, and killed for His name.

The example of Thomas is key to seeing the transformation that occurred

among this group of eleven men. Despite every other apostle bearing witness that Jesus had returned, he said, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” It was after this that Christ appeared to Thomas, and almost immediately his entire mindset changes. In utter shock and amazement, he proclaims, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). He transitions from a point of unbelief to belief, from despair to rejoicing, from hopelessness to pressing on, from surrendering in defeat to serving the Christ. On that day, “Doubting Thomas” became “Diligent Thomas.” The rest of his life would be surrounded by preaching the risen Christ, suffering for His name, and eventually dying by persecution.

The fact that these men lost everything and gained nothing in this world in order to preach the gospel bears witness to the fact that He truly was raised from the dead. Not even one disciple denied his faith in Him. They never confessed to lying about the resurrection, even if it meant saving their lives. Furthermore, the hardened sinner Saul of Tarsus left his work in persecuting the church because the risen Jesus appeared to him. If there is ever any evidence that Christ is “Lord and God,” it is this amazing reality.

The Nature of the Resurrection

What was the resurrected body of Christ like? How could someone be brought back to life in such a broken, disabled state? How could Christ eat, drink, and speak when His earthly body was put through such tremendous stress and beatings? Furthermore, how would His body not be consumed by the atmosphere and dissolved when ascending into heaven? Wayne Grudem rightly points out, “Christ’s resurrection was not simply a coming back from the dead, as had been experienced by others before, such as Lazarus (John 11:1-44), for then Jesus would have been subject to weakness and aging and eventually would have died again just as all other human beings die.”² Rather, His resurrection was unique and unlike any other.

Paul taught that Christians would receive a body like Christ’s. We “shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:49). John wrote that “when he appears we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). Our perishable bodies will become imperishable because Christ’s resurrection was a promise of the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). Therefore, when we read about Christ being raised from the dead, it should also serve as a reminder to us of the resurrection we will receive if we are found faithful before God.

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 609.

The Deity of Christ

Owen Olbricht

One of the major themes of the Bible is that Jesus is God, not the Father, but He is God, the Son of God. Jesus is referred to as the Son of God to communicate that Jesus is God like the Father in all aspects, even as an earthly son is as human as his father. “Son of God” is used in reference to Jesus to show that Jesus has the very nature and likeness of the Father (Jn. 1:18). He can declare God to humans in God’s fulness for He is God. A cat or a dog cannot make known to us the realities of God. Jesus must be God if He is to reveal God to us but cannot fully make God known to us if He is not God.

Old Testament Prophecy

If Jesus is not God by His very nature, He could not have fulfilled the OT prophecies and would fail to qualify as the Son of God as proclaimed in the NT. Isaiah prophesied of Jesus, that He would be Immanuel, meaning “God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:23).

Jesus is seen as the Son of God as proven by His resurrection (Rom. 1:4), and “mighty God” (Isa. 9:6), as revealed by His miracles (Jn. 20:31). He fulfilled OT prophecies which no human could fulfill. He is the child that was born as the mighty God and is the ruler who was to come from Bethlehem (Mt. 2:6). His goings were of old,

from eternity. “Goings” is a present active plural verb that expresses action that continues to continue, and *olam* is an open-ended word that could or could not refer to continued action that is modified by the verb, thus His goings being plural are goings from eternity (Micah 5:2; NKJV).

Jesus must be God as Genesis 1:1 states that God created the heavens and the earth. Jesus created all that is created, so He is God who created all things. “All things were made through Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made” (Jn. 1:3; also Col. 1:15, 16). He could not have created Himself, but He was not created so He is God, the Son, who is the creator of all.

New Testament Testimony

John began his gospel by writing, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (Jn. 1:3). John clearly stated that Jesus is God and that He is the creator of all, for nothing was made that Jesus did not make. He is eternal as the creator of everything.

If Jesus is not God, He should not be worshipped, for God alone is to be worshipped (Mt. 4:10). Jesus allowed people to worship Him even as the

angels also worship Jesus (Heb. 1:6). Jesus is God and has come to reveal God to us, so we can know Him and have eternal life (John 17:3).

The Gospel of Christ

Jimmy Clark

The gospel of Christ is the significant message for all people everywhere (cf. Mark 16:15-16). It is without dispute the most important message of good news ever to be proclaimed due to its promises. Paul wrote to the Galatians of this message in the days of Abraham, where it is stated, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8, KJV). Consider three things about the gospel of Christ as revealed in scripture that should cause all people to take notice and give heed.

A Personal Message

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he

was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). It is of note here that Paul had received and believed this message long before he brought it to the Corinthians. Here he reminds them of the fact that Jesus died “for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3).

The Old Testament had explicitly foretold of this fact. Isaiah wrote, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:4-6).

Why would anyone give heed to a message that had no personal importance? The very fact that the death of Christ is addressed as being for our sins should cause all of accountable age to take note. The ultimate consequence of sin is death (cf. Rom. 6:23;

James 1:15). Jesus tasted death for all men (cf. Heb. 2:9). Therefore, someone dying for one's personal sins must be taken seriously.

A Powerful Message

The death of Christ would be of no effect to man if Christ is still dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:14-19). Therefore, the burial and resurrection of Christ are as important to the message of the gospel as is the preaching of the cross. The resurrection of Christ from the grave is a guarantee from God that the dead will be raised (cf. John 5:25-29; 1 Cor. 15:22; Acts 17:31). Those that are Christ's shall be delivered up into the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23-24). Paul encouraged the Thessalonians of this very promise (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

While the cross with the shedding of blood delivers from sin, the resurrection unto life delivers from the cemetery. It is no wonder that Paul would write to the Roman brethren, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:15-16).

The atoning power to liberate from sin and the almighty power of God to supernaturally give life to the dead is the common need of all humanity in every generation.

A Persuasive Message

Finally, the benefits of this gospel only come to those who apply the conditions given by the Lord himself. Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel to all and stated, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). It is essential that this personal and powerful message lead one to be fully persuaded in obedience to its conditions.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thess. 1:6-10).

Paul wrote to the Roman brethren of their obedience, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17). That form of doctrine is seen in the verses previous, where he wrote, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus

Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:3-6).

The benefits of the gospel are not unconditional, though the Lord God wants all to be saved and come to a full

knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). Hearing the truth and believing it (cf. Col. 1:4-5); repenting of one’s sins and putting to death that old way of life (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10; 5:14-15); confessing one’s faith in the Lord (cf. Rom. 10:9-10); being buried in water for the saving of one’s soul (cf. Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); and arising out of the water to live a new kind of life puts one’s faith in the Lord who promised to save through the provisions of Christ in the gospel (cf. 2 Tim. 1:9-10). Today, one cannot and must not separate Christ from the gospel nor the gospel from Christ.

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The Authority of Christ

Robert Waggoner

Jesus told his disciples that “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (ESV, Matthew 28:18). His unlimited jurisdiction is over both heaven and earth. That may be because his kingdom that is now on earth will be in heaven eternally. His kingdom, the church, is called “the kingdom of heaven”¹ and “the kingdom of God.”² It will last forever (Luke 1:33; Hebrews 1:8).

Although Jesus claimed to have all authority, he did not claim to be superior to God, the Father. Nor did he claim to be inferior. He claimed to be equal to the Father (John 5:19-26). His authority (power) was received from the Father (Revelation 2:27).

In Matthew 28:18, the Greek word translated for the English word “authority,” ἐξουσία (pronounced, ex-oo-see’-ah), is translated as “power” in the King James Version and the New English Bible. Jesus created the world and continues to uphold it “by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:2-3).

While on earth, he demonstrated his power to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24) and to work miracles. He healed the lame (Matthew 15:30) and the leper (Mark 1:40-41).

He cast out demons (Matthew 8:16), enabled the deaf to hear (Matthew 11:5), the blind to see (Matthew 12:22), raised the dead (Luke 7:22; John 12:1), and predicted the denial of Peter (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30) and his betrayal by Judas (Matthew 26:25; John 13:26).

He had supernatural power over nature. He walked on water (Matthew 14:25), stilled the stormy sea (Matthew 8:26), cursed a fig tree (Mark 11:14, 21), and arose from the dead (Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6).

Jesus told his apostles that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in the name of his Son to teach his apostles and bring to their remembrance all he had said to them (John 14:26). When he died, he left them with peace (John 14:27). He will come again (Matthew 16:27; John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3) and judge the world (Acts 10:42; 17:31).

He rules over angels (Matthew 25:31; Luke 4:10) and demons (Mark 3:15). He delegated authority to apostles for them to cast out demons (Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1; 10:19). He claimed to be “the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5). The apostle Paul declared him to

¹ Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 16:18-19.

² Matthew 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43; Mark 1:15; 4:11, 26, Romans 14:17; 1

Corinthians 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:50; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Revelation 12:10.

be “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). He is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). He is savior of the world (John 3:16; 17:21; 1 John 4:14).

In redeeming believers from sin (Romans 3:24; 8:23; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12), he is mediator between God and mankind (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15; 12:24).

He mediates our prayers to God (John 14:13; 16:23; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17). If we sin, he is our advocate to the Father (1 John 2:1).

He is King of kings and Lord of

lords (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16). When he was on earth, he was the Word of God personified (John 1:1). People who believe and follow him will bypass the judgement into eternal life (John 5:24). He holds the keys to death and hades (Revelation 1:18).

Inasmuch as Jesus has all authority, he has the right to command his disciples to preach the word and to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). And, since he has all power, his promise that he will be with his disciples “to the end of the age” is guaranteed (Matthew 28:20).

The Kingdom of Christ

Andy Erwin

The authority of Christ is associated with such terms as His throne, majesty, kingdom, dominion, crown, rule, and reign. If Christ has no kingdom, He has no authority, and our faith in Christ is meaningless, pointless, without promise, and without hope. If Christ is not now seated upon His throne, the Gentiles remain outside of the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12-13); the law remains authoritative and binding; and God has yet to accomplish His eternal purpose by establishing His eternal kingdom.

The question before us then becomes, “Does Christ have authority on earth?” Does Christ have a kingdom? If He does, His throne, dominion, kingdom, and majesty stand as fact, and we will be able to find evidence of this fact within the scriptures.

The doctrine of premillennial dispensationalism (which we will discuss more later in the study) places the establishment of the kingdom in the future after the second coming of Christ.¹ According to this teaching the church was established as a temporary

¹ R. H. Boll, *The Kingdom of God* (Louisville, KY: Word and Work, n.d.), 13.

substitute for the kingdom due to Israel's rejection of the Messiah. Like Israel of old, premillennialists believe Jesus intended to make a world empire and military power out of Israel, but because He was rejected, He established the church instead of His kingdom. Premillennialists make the same mistake the Jews made and are making. They are looking for the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom.

The Nature of Christ's Kingdom

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world (John 18:36). When some of His disciples wanted to coronate Him during His earthly ministry, He withdrew (John 6:15). It was never Jesus' intention to rule from an earthly throne in Jerusalem. In fact, prophecy testifies against this notion. When king Jehoiachin was carried captive to Babylon (cf. 2 Kings 24:8-17), Jeremiah said, "Write this man as childless (RSV), a man who shall not succeed in his days; for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah" (Jeremiah 22:24-30). This king is called by three different names, Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6-8), Jeconiah (1 Chronicles 3:16-17; Matthew 1:12) and Coniah (Jeremiah 22:24). Christ is a descendant of this king (Matthew 1:12); therefore, He cannot reign in Judah (Jerusalem), the

place the premillennial advocates say He will come back and reign as an earthly king for 1,000 years.

Christ does not rule from Jerusalem, but He rules from heaven, seated at the right hand of God in heaven.² God's throne (see 1 Kings 1:32-40; 1 Chronicles 29:23) would be established forever.³ God's promise is fulfilled in Christ.⁴

Zechariah foretold of the reign of Christ, prophesying:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: "Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zechariah 6:12-13).

Christ's reign is three-fold as Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), as Priest, and as King after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:10; 7:11). His temple is His kingdom, His church (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:9 ff). God's temple is now restored in Christ as promised in the prophets.⁵ Christ is High Priest

² Acts 2:30; Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18; 3:1; Hebrews 1:3-8; 8:1; 12:2, 25.

³ 2 Samuel 7:12-17; Psalm 89:3-4, 28-37; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Daniel 2:44.

⁴ Isaiah 22:22; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:24 ff.; Acts 13:16 ff.; 2 Timothy 2:8.

⁵ Amos 9:11-12; Zechariah 6:12-13; see Acts 15:13-19; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 8:1-2.

over His priesthood which will never be replaced (Hebrews 7:24).

Jesus is crowned “Lord and Christ” and “King of kings and Lord of lords” – “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8, KJV). After He conquers the last enemy, which is death, the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:22-26). When Jesus returns, it will be to gather His kingdom from the earth, not to establish His kingdom upon the earth.⁶

The Establishment of Christ’s Kingdom

While Jesus does not reign from Jerusalem, His kingdom did begin in Jerusalem. Both Isaiah and Micah foretold the following:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2).

Jeremiah also foretold: “At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts” (Jeremiah 3:17).

Daniel foretold the time of the kingdom’s establishment, saying, “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

The kings mentioned by Daniel were the kings of the fourth empire dating from Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon. In order they are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Thus, in the days of the kings (Caesars) of Rome, the kingdom of God was established.

When did Jesus become King and when did His kingdom begin? Jesus said to the twelve, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1). Concerning this power, Jesus told His apostles, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:28; 2 Peter 3:10-13.

On the day of Pentecost, in the city of Jerusalem, during the days of the Roman empire, the Holy Spirit made His presence and power known and confirmed that the kingdom was being established (Acts 2). Peter directed the audience to the scriptures as he spoke of Joel referring to the Holy Spirit (cf. Joel 2:28-32). Peter spoke of David with reference to Christ upon His throne (Ps. 16:8-10; 110:1) and of His reign according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23).

The Citizens of Christ's Kingdom

The kingdom *has been* received (Hebrews 12:25-29). The question we now ask: who received it? Souls *have been* and can be added to the kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Who is added? Christ now reigns over His kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:25). Over whom is He reigning?

First, we must establish that the kingdom is not and was never intended to be solely Jewish. God promised to Abraham and his children that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3 ff.). By inspiration, Paul made it clear that this promise is fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29). Note, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (vv. 28-29).

Through Isaiah, God gave many prophecies to indicate that the family would be enlarged to include the Gentiles.⁷ The family was enlarged beginning with the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). The new name was then given.⁸

Seeing that His kingdom is not strictly a Jewish kingdom, the citizens of the kingdom do not enter through a physical birth. One becomes a citizen and child of this kingdom by a spiritual re-birth. One must be born into the kingdom of God by a new birth of water and Spirit (John 3:3-5).

On Pentecost we see the first example of souls being added to the newly established kingdom by being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-41). God has continued adding the saved to the church/kingdom through the new birth of water and Spirit since that day (Acts 2:47). Thus, the spiritual re-birth is promised only to those who obey God (Acts 5:32). The obedient are they who are "rich in faith," "love the Lord," and are "heirs of the kingdom" (James 2:5).

The Law of Christ's Kingdom

Every kingdom has a law. The law of the kingdom of Christ rests upon Christ and His authority. Isaiah said that the government would be upon His

⁷ Isaiah 11:1-5, 10; 42:1-9; 49:1-6, 8, 19-22; 54:2-3, 62:2.

⁸ Isaiah 56:5; 62:2; 65:15; Acts 11:26.

shoulders and of the increase of the government and peace there would be no end (Isaiah 9:6-7). Christ confirmed that the authority of heaven and earth had been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). When we speak the truth of Christ, *our* testimony has all authority (Titus 2:15).

By the authority of Christ, the terms of salvation are given to Jews and Gentiles alike.⁹ The new covenant was purchased by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28) and offers the remission of sins to every nation, kindred, people, and tongue of the earth. In His kingdom there is no discrimination between Jews and Gentiles.

The law of Christ is not to be viewed merely as a continuation of the law of Moses. The law of Moses was fulfilled and abolished by Christ. Christ fulfilled *all* of the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17-18). Paul confirms by inspiration that Christ has abolished the law.¹⁰ God made the covenant with Israel old by the resurrection and gospel of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:13). He took away the first so that He could establish the second (Hebrews 10:9). Through Christ we have a new covenant with God. God promised a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34), knowing this would be fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 8:7 ff.), and in Christ we

have this new and living way (Hebrews 10:19-20).

His kingdom is now established. The Prince of life has been welcomed into heaven, lauded by angels, and is seated upon His throne at the right hand of the Father – “Thy scepter, thy throne, thy kingdom.” It is not for man to doubt but to bow in humble subjection and obedience to His gospel, His government, and His glory.



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⁹ Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 15:11; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21; Romans 1:16; Romans 2:10-11; Romans 10:12; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Ephesians 3:1-6.

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 3; Galatians 3; Romans 7:1-4

The Church of Christ

Elliot Hamm

What do you think of when you think of the church of Christ? I recently asked a Bible class of six- to ten-year-olds that very question. The consensus was the church of Christ is “my church.” As a result, I could not help but think of Jesus’ words, “And on this rock I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18, NKJV). It is the church that was purchased by Jesus, with His own blood.

I asked that same question to my two children, ages six and two. My youngest agreed with the previous answer. My oldest gave a response I did not expect. She told me that the church of Christ is “where Christians are.” She further explained that it is where you would find them, but she also told me that Christians are those who are “baptized in the water.” Now, taking into consideration the answers the children gave, it leaves me amazed how much we can learn from them. Still, let us further examine this question, what is the church of Christ? This question has brought about thoughts, comments, and sermons from numerous faithful gospel preachers of times past and current. This question is a question that is

“of vital importance to the salvation of your soul.”¹

Origin

We need to begin and expound upon the origin of the church, but we must also differentiate between what the church is and is not. The church of Christ is unique from denominations because it is the only church that God designed and Christ built (Ephesians 3:10-11; Matthew 16:18). It is not a human invention but a divine institution.

The church of Christ has only one source of authority. That is the Bible, God’s Word! It is the only church that we read about in the Bible (Romans 16:16). It is a church that does not have a creed but has Christ as its example and pattern.

The members of Christ’s church bear His name – Christians (Acts 11:26). It is a church where there is no earthly head but only Christ (Colossians 1:18) and that speaks where the Bible speaks and is silent where the Bible is silent (1 Peter 4:11).

It is a church that teaches, preaches, and studies a powerful doctrine that Paul explains in Romans

¹ V. E. Howard, *What Is the Church of Christ?* (West Monroe, LA: Central Printers & Publishers, 1989), 31.

1:16. It has the power to save souls and is patterned after New Testament teachings.

Doctrine

What do the churches of Christ teach? In short, it teaches the doctrine that God has designed, a doctrine that Christ taught. It is a doctrine that the apostles taught. It details how mankind can be saved. We often refer to this as God's Plan of Salvation. It consists of the following: hear God's Word (Romans 10:13-17); believe God's Word (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6); repent of sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30-31); confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10); be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38); and live faithfully (Revelation 2:10).

What are the practices of the churches of Christ? The practices can be summed up with how the churches of Christ worship. We worship God, not ourselves. We must do this as God has commanded in the Bible. There are five (5) acts of authorized worship. Those acts are singing without the aid of instrumental music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); prayer (1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17); partaking of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28); giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2); and preaching (Acts 20:7; 2 Timothy 4:1-5). We are

to worship God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24b).

Names & People in the Church

To fully comprehend what the church of Christ is, we must also look at the name. We have previously established that Jesus is the founder of the church, the builder (Matthew 16:18). As such it bears His name. The Bible also calls it "the church" (Acts 8:1), "the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12), "the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15), and "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23).

It is not the only thing that bears Christ's name. The church consists of people – more specifically, followers of Jesus who have faithfully obeyed His teachings. As a result of faithful obedience to God's Word, they are added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). Acts 11:26 tells us that those were first "called Christians at Antioch." "Members of the churches of Christ speak of the church in scriptural terms."²

Conclusion

To answer the question, what is the church of Christ, we had to look at the origins, authority, doctrine (teachings and practices), and people. All these different subjects show us what the church is. Truly, it is sad that time must be spent to distinguish what the church is and is not because of "confusion"

² Leroy Brownlow, *Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ* (Brownlow, 1973), 30.

that has been, and is still, in the world regarding churches. Quite simply put, it is the only church revealed in the New Testament. It is the only church, when compared to denominations, that has roots in what Jesus declared in His earthly ministry, established on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus explained in Matthew 15:13 that the other religions that are founded upon traditions of men will be “rooted up.”

So, friends, what is the church of Christ? We should follow the New Testament example. Read what the Bible says on the matter. Even listen to

what small children can tell us. Is the church of Christ our church, the church where other Christians are found? I pray that we have established this pattern in the New Testament as our guide, not differing from what is found in the Bible by adding to it or taking away from it to fit our desires!

I pray that we are all faithful to the truth, that we are still following what the apostles were commanded in the Great Commission given by Jesus as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-18, making disciples of people by being disciples ourselves.

Continuing the Work of Christ

Tom McLemore

“...always abounding in the work of the Lord...”

1 Corinthians 15:58

The phrase “the work of the Lord” indicates two things: 1) it is the work which the Lord himself does; 2) when Christians are engaged in the same activity in which the Lord engages, they are doing the work of the Lord. Christians must recognize that evangelism is the Lord working in and through us. As we engage in the work of the Lord, the Lord works with us (Mark 16:20).

The story of the early church is a story of the Lord’s activity in and through his disciples. This is emphasized by the prominence of “the name

of the Lord Jesus” and similar phrases in the book of Acts. Luke stresses that even though the Jews had put Jesus of Nazareth to death, God raised him up, he sits on David’s throne at God’s right hand, and he is *still at work* among them through the Spirit. His murderers did not get rid of him at all! Even though he could no longer be seen walking among men, even though his audible voice was no longer heard as it was before, and even though he was not *physically present* while healing and helping, he was *still there*. His work continued.

Now, again, the way that Luke gets this across is by emphasizing *the name of Jesus* in connection with what went

on in the early days of Christianity. This is particularly evident in the healing of the lame man in Acts 3 with emphasis upon the name of Jesus. Jesus was present with his people. His saving power was still active during the time of his absence.

Just as Jesus promised that he would be with his people unto the end of the age, he *was* (Matthew 18:20; 28:20). Luke said at the beginning of his second book, “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus BEGAN to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). What Luke relates in this *second* book is what Jesus was CONTINUING to do and teach. And the manner in which Luke emphasizes this is by letting us hear the name of Jesus and see what occurred in connection with it.

Jesus was still active, still *doing*, still *teaching*. His cause continued to move onward and outward. The use of his name brings this fact into sharp focus. The point of the miracle Peter and John performed upon the lame man is not the miracle itself but that *the name of Jesus who was doing the miracle!* So, the speaking of the name of Jesus was to the early church a *witness*...a testimony that Jesus was alive, present with them, active, and doing.

When we look at the rest of Luke’s book, we can see how important this is. When the sick were healed, the name of Jesus was spoken (Acts 4:7, 10). When signs and miracles occurred, the name of Jesus was heard (Acts 4:30).

When people were baptized, Jesus’ name was spoken (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; note carefully Acts 19:1-5; 22:16).

When the disciples taught and preached, the name of Jesus was spoken (Acts 5:28, 40; 8:12; 9:15, 27, 29). The name of Jesus was praised (Acts 19:17). People called upon the name of Jesus (Acts 9:14; 22:16). When people suffered for being Christians and were ready to die, it is clear that it was for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:41; 9:16; 15:26; 21:13). And perhaps Luke’s message is emphasized most explicitly when he reports that as Peter healed Aeneas, he said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you” (Acts 9:34).

When we baptize someone, we speak the name of Jesus. When we pray we say, “In Jesus’ name.” Not because baptism or prayer would be no good without it. Not because there is power in the ritual act of saying Jesus’ name in and of itself, but because it bears a message! It says, “We are doing this because we believe Jesus is alive to cleanse this person who is being baptized! He is alive to bear our humble prayers to the throne of the Majesty on high! He is alive, he is with us, and he is saving and acting!” This we say when we speak the name of Jesus with these acts. Any good works and worthy accomplishments among his people are *his* doing! This applies especially when we are engaged in the work of evangelism, for in a unique way, this is “the work of the Lord.”

The Lord is teaching his word through us.

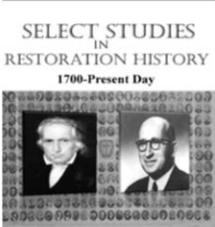
How is “the work of the Lord” possible? The resurrected, exalted Lord is the source of strength for doing the work of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2:16, 17; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:8). There are numerous passages about the Lord being at work in us (Ephesians 3:20; Philippians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 4:12; Philippians 1:6). Paul depended upon this strength in doing the work of the Lord. God’s grace enabled him (1 Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Everything Paul did in the work of the Lord he did “in the Lord,” i.e., in fellowship with the risen Lord, under his direction, enabled by him (1 Corinthians 9:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 5:10; Ephesians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; Philippians 2:19, 24; 2 Thessalonians 3:4; Philippians 4:10). “In the Lord,” the church can do everything that the work of the Lord requires. We may abound in it, labor (work hard) in it, be steadfast and constant in it, and be immovable in it.

Engage, then, in the work of the Lord, all of his people! Be fervent in the work of the Lord. Do the work of the Lord “in Jesus name.” Always utter that blessed and glorious name as we go about doing his work. Let him work in us and through us, and acknowledge his working in us and through us, “in the name of Jesus.”

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The New Birth

John 3:1-7

1. The expression “born again” is Biblical terminology.
2. Those who have not experienced it are under the power of Satan. (cf. John 3:5 w/ Colossians 1:13)

I. Thing Upon Which We Will Agree

- A. Christ is positive about the requirement. “Verily... except.”
- B. Whatever the New Birth is, it is contained in the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46, 47.
- C. That which the Apostles required of sinners explains what the New Birth is and that it is required by Christ. Acts 2:37-41.

II. The Requirements of The New Birth

- A. How the Spirit does his part:
 1. The word is the instrument of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 2:17
 2. Begetting through the word. 1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Peter 1:22-25; James 1:18
- B. Water is a reference to Baptism.
 1. The delivery from the grave of water brings us into the new life. Romans 6:1-6.
 2. Baptism puts us into Christ where we are called the “new creation.” Galatians 3:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 12:13.
- C. Peter began those on Pentecost through the preaching of the Gospel, and they were baptized. Acts 2:4, 22, 36-38.

III. Some Other Considerations:

- A. Jesus was using figurative language with Nicodemus; Peter was using literal language on day of Pentecost.
- B. Nicodemus could NOT have entered the kingdom that day because it was not yet established. Mark 9:1
- C. One’s genealogical, racial, economic, educational, or social standing does not give them a standing before God.

Have you been “born again”? Are you a genuine Christian?

-Mike Kiser

