

The Keys Of The Kingdom

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Doug Post

If you would like to be a guest writer for TKOK you may contact me at jfmiller61@gmail.com.

To announce up coming events like Gospel Meetings, Lectures, Singing events etc... Just use the email link above to contact me. Please feel free to tell others and have them sign up for their copy today. Use this link to join the mailing list. http://jfmiller.com/keysofthekingdom/?page_id=1316 . May God Bless You. Jim and the Staff

Weylan Deaver Falsifies His Daddy's Holy Spirit Baptism Doctrine (Part 1)¹

Daniel Denham

Parrish, Florida

Stop the presses! Here is a newsflash concerning Mac Deaver's doctrine that Holy Spirit baptism occurs today and is necessary for one to experience the New Birth! Weylan Deaver, Mac's eldest son, has falsified his daddy's teaching on the subject! More to follow!

Of course, Weylan is completely unaware of the fact that he has done so, as also his father. For people who pride themselves as logicians, they, in fact, both have missed the clear implications of some of their own teachings elsewhere on the subject of salvation bearing on this newest peccadillo from Mac's furtive mind. But nonetheless it has been done. But first we must back track a bit to bring everyone up to date on the matter.

A SOUND ARGUMENT ON THE FALSIFICATION OF THE DEAVER DOCTRINE

Several months ago I posted on Face Book the following notification on my page for public access:

Mac Deaver's present day Holy Spirit doctrine is falsified by one precisely stated question. True or False. One must be in Christ in the sense of being in the spiritual body of Christ as per Ephesians 1:3 and Ephesians 1:7 in order to receive the remission of sins. Mac teaches that one receives the remission of sins first in water baptism and then is regenerated in order to enter into the spiritual body of Christ, the church, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To draw out the point a bit, please consider the following hypothetical argument. If it is the case that the remission of sins can only be received initially at the time one enters into the kingdom (Eph. 1:3, 7), and if it is the case that the time of entering into the kingdom entails the regeneration of said individual (John 3:3, 5), then it must be the case that the

1 PUBLISHER'S NOTE: This article is being reprinted by permission of the author, Mr. Daniel Howard Denham, and was first published in the *Defender* Publication by Michael Hatcher.

receiving of the remission of sins by and the regeneration of said person must occur at the same instant.

The hypothetical statement can be easily set up in a Modus Ponens form syllogism with the statement comprising the Major Premise, the antecedent (the "if" portion, also called the protasis in grammar) comprising the Minor Premise, and the consequent (the "then" portion, also called the apodosis in grammar) comprising the Conclusion. As a Modus Ponens form in classical logic, it would be formally valid. The conclusion then follows. As the texts cited show, the premises would also be true. Thus, the conclusion would be true. The argument then is materially true and thus a sound argument. The conclusion is true, and so Mac's teaching must be false.

In short, consider: Major Premise: If the Mac Deaver doctrine of present day Holy Spirit baptism is true, then the doctrine that alien sinners receive the remission of sins before and without entering the spiritual body of Christ is true. Minor Premise: The doctrine that alien sinners receive the remission of sins before and without entering the spiritual body of Christ is not true (Eph. 1:3, 7). Conclusion: Therefore, the Mac Deaver doctrine of present day Holy Spirit baptism is not true. This argument is in the form of Modus Tollens and is formally valid. The premises are also true. So the argument is materially true and thus sound! Mac's doctrine is thoroughly falsified.

As of this writing, Mac has not even attempted to engage logically the sound argument posted above and made available to him through various sources. He really cannot answer it. He has resorted to what has become a standard reply from him on anything he really cannot answer. It is the hackneyed claim that something in the argument is "imprecise." He will not show why he deems it as "imprecise." It just is, because he says it is. That is just a dodge. It sounds good in sophistry, but it does not read well in print. Mac knows that a sound argument has been made against his doctrine, and so does Weylan! This is because they endorsed the very same argument in the writings of one, Thomas B. Warren, as shall be shown! But first let us consider the attempted rebuttal that the phrase is too "imprecise."

MAC DEAVER'S ATTEMPTED REBUTTAL ANSWERED

One of Mac's acolytes, Marlin Kilpatrick, was notified of this particular argument against Mac Deaver's Spirit baptism doctrine. At first, Marlin, to his credit, acknowledged that the argument was very problematic for Mac's teaching, but then he went to Mac to clear up the problem for him, as Marlin has repeatedly done when the Scriptures and logic clash with the new theories of his mentor. What was the devastating answer that Mac gave to Marlin to clear up his problem? As Marlin quoted him to others, "The phrase 'in Christ' is just not precise enough!" The poor apostle Paul, upon whose writings and use of the phrase and its equivalents the argument is based, did not have Mac Deaver to tell him to be more precise. What an amazing condition of things! We have to find out from Mac what Paul really meant to say but was too imprecise in saying it himself! Mac has already affirmed that Philip messed up in Samaria by not baptizing the Samaritans by expressly saying "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," so that Peter and John had to come all the way from Jerusalem to correct the matter (Except, 151-162). Now, he implicitly edicts Paul and the Holy Spirit who inspired him for imprecision in his teaching! Can you believe it? But such is the implication of Marlin's recounting of Mac's "explanation." Let them iron it out between them!

Now, to be certain, Mac will claim that the argument's use is too imprecise, and not Paul's use, but it will be observed that the argument specifically is based on Paul's use in Ephesians 1:3, 7. Clearly, these verses use the phrase in an adverbial, locative sense, which means that Paul is locating where "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3) and "redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7) are to be found. They are "in Christ" thus meaning they are in His spiritual body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). One receives these blessings when he is baptized in water into Christ to put Christ on, according to Galatians 3:26-29. Well, that is quite precise in force, is it not? And quite easy to grasp! The idea of incorporation into Christ, i.e. His spiritual body, is the significance of this typical Pauline use of the phrase and its equivalents. If one is in Christ, He is in the church. If one is in the church, he is in Christ. The phrases "in Him" and "in Whom" used in Ephesians 1 simply reflect the same basic incorporative idea as "in Christ." This is precisely how the argument employs the phrase and its equivalents. Thus, the claim by Mac is false. The rebuttal fails.

If one is in the Christ and thus in the church, it must be the case that when he enters into Christ he also enters the church. Further, when he enters the church, he necessarily also enters into the kingdom of God, which is the church on earth today (Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:12-13). If he is in the kingdom, he therefore must also have experienced the New Birth, as that is essential for one to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). One cannot be in the kingdom without having been born again – born of both water and the Spirit. But Mac admits that when one is first lowered into the water, he receives immediately the remission of sins, even though Mac also contends that such a one is not yet a Christian, despite having the remission of sins, and must then be baptized in the Spirit to be regenerated and thus become a Christian. Mac claims that the man who has remission of sins without being a Christian, a member of the Lord’s church, is a “saint.” He is a “saint” but not a child of God, according to Mac Deaver’s doctrine. (Biblical Notes Quarterly, 2011, p. 14).

The argument shows, as Ephesians 1:3,7 teach that when one receives the remission of sins he necessarily becomes a child of God because he is now “in Christ” by the same process and at the exact same point in time. When he enters Christ, his sins are forgiven, and vice versa. As a result, he also becomes a child of God “through the faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26-29). The latter phrase is again an adverbial, locative construction telling where one becomes a child of God “through the [Note the Greek article, HDD] faith” or Gospel system. He receives the blessings pertaining thereto. He is an heir “according to the promise.” So, the Deaver doctrine of present day Holy Spirit baptism to regenerate people as children of God is a false doctrine. Mac cannot answer that, which, I strongly suspect, is one reason he pulled out of the debate. He would have to deny the obvious to hold to his error.

ANOTHER PROBLEM FOR MAC CREATED BY HIS OWN WRITINGS

The position taken by Mac in his 2011 BNQ article is also directly contradicted by that taken by him in his first book on the Holy Spirit, which is titled *The Holy Spirit (Center of Controversy – Basis of Unity)* and published in 2007. On page 301, in describing the process of being baptized in water and then the Spirit, he writes:

As a man’s body is lowered in the water, when it is submerged in the water, the Holy Spirit submerges that man’s human spirit within himself to change his nature. And at the precise moment when God

considers that man no longer sinner but now saint, at that precise instant, the regenerating submerging Spirit moves from the outside to the inside of that heart (Tit. 3:5; Gal. 4:6). Less than this we cannot write; more than this we do not know. (301).

It will be observed that (1) Mac clearly implied that the Holy Spirit is operating initially on an alien sinner directly and immediately while the sinner's body is immersed in the water of baptism. That entails a direct, immediate operation of the Spirit on a person who is still in the world as an alien sinner. But Mac admits that those who are of the world cannot receive the Spirit (John 14:17). He also affirmed here (2) that the reception of forgiveness of sins and the regeneration of one's human spirit occur at the same "precise instant." He says that "...when God considers that man no longer sinner but now saint, at that precise instant, the regenerating submerging Spirit moves from the outside to the inside of the heart..." So, there is no time difference between forgiveness and regeneration according to this statement. Thus, Mac stands here in direct contradiction with his position in the BNQ article that affirms that the alien sinner is first forgiven or cleansed of sin in order to become a saint, and then the new saint is immersed in the Spirit in order to be regenerated and become a child of God – a Christian. (3) Mac implied that he knows that what he has written here in 2007 on this point is the truth and he cannot write anything less than this on the matter and be true to it. Yet, within 5 years his known truth changed, and he is now affirming that one can be a saint first but a Christian later! Simply, amazing!

This metamorphosis in his doctrinal "truth" was necessitated by his realization of the self-contradictions in his prior "truth." Now, he wishes for us to accept the conclusion of this new "truth," which he has come to hold. But he still offers the proviso that even that "truth" may have to change as he comes to greater realizations and new conclusions through his continually receiving new insights directly from the Holy Spirit in his studies of the subject. As he claims this does not entail new information, it must be the case that his mental capacities are being enhanced by the Spirit with these new enlightenments. But new self-contradictions have arisen, despite such advancement in his brain power.

Perhaps, it was the realization of this glaring self-contradiction between Mac's 2007 book and 2011 article that moved him to submarine the debate that we had agreed to hold. At any event, it is clearly a self-contradiction that refutes his doctrine. If he asserts his 2007 teaching stated above is true, then he implies a direct operation on an alien sinner. If he asserts that his 2011 doctrine is true,

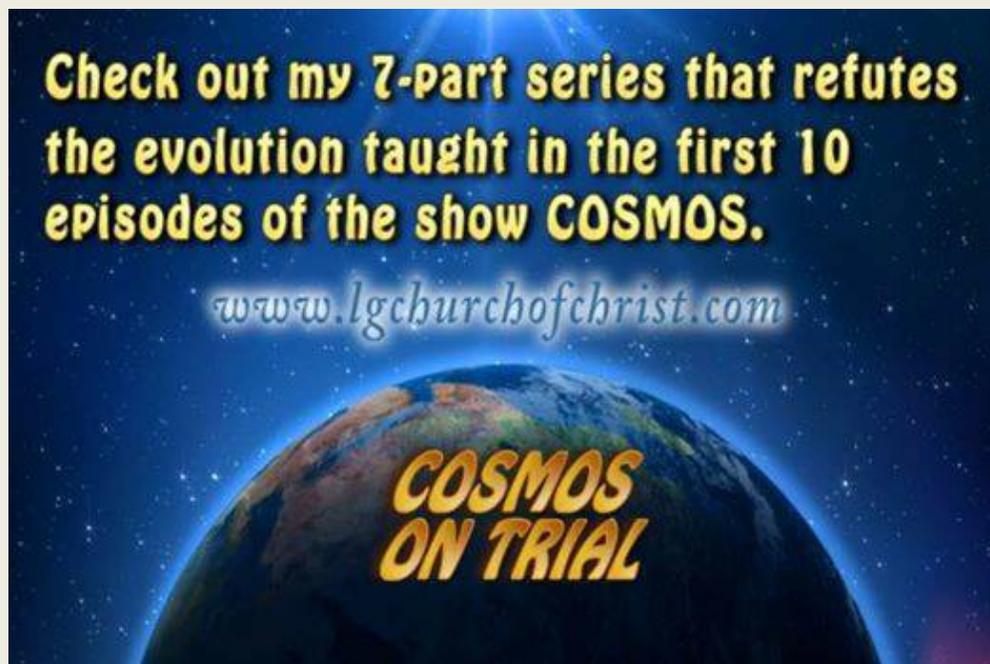
thus making the distinction between one being a saint and one being a Christian under New Testament law, then he implicitly admits that he taught false doctrine in 2007, of which he has not repented, and really did not know what he claimed to know at that time. It then begs the question: Does he really know that the 2011 doctrine he is teaching is true or do we have to wait for the next evolutionary stage of Mac's Spirit baptism doctrine to get closer to the truth?

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Here you will find video lessons from the Bible by Cougan Collins.

[LG Ministry Video Center](http://www.lgchurchofchrist.com) www.lgchurchofchrist.com



Where God Will Not Go

Scott Crawford
Clay, Alabama

There are several stories in the Scriptures that are familiar to almost everyone, such as the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, recorded in the Book of Daniel, chapter three, in which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, built an image of gold, set it on the plain of Dura, and then commanded that when the music started all would fall down and worship the image. Of course, our heroes refused to bow, and subsequently were scheduled to die in a fiery furnace. Then there's the story of Jonah – God's reluctant prophet. "Arise, go to Nineveh," God told Jonah, but we all know that although Jonah thought he was on a boat headed toward Tarshish, he was actually going to end up in a big fish headed toward Nineveh. After a one sentence sermon, Jonah climbs a hill outside the city, pouts, and then just gets mad that God won't destroy the people whom Jonah hates. Lastly, recall the details recorded for us about Paul near the end of the Book of Acts. After appealing to Caesar, Paul is placed in the custody of a centurion named Julius and bundled off to Italy with other prisoners. Eventually, they run into a storm on the sea, throw out the cargo, throw out the ship's tackle, and finally throw out all hope of being saved.

Each of these stories occurs in a different time and place, yet each one has a common thread that runs through it; each one points not to the tragedy that occurs, but to the presence of God. After tossing into the furnace Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, Nebuchadnezzar asks his counselors exactly how many men were tossed into the fire. Three, right? Yet, there were four in the fire, and one had a form like the Son of God (Dan. 3:24-25). As for Jonah, we know that God was listening in the belly of the fish, but it was afterward that God really comes and tries to help him understand why Nineveh wasn't destroyed (Jonah 4:10-11). In the story of Paul, during the tempest, in the dark of the night, when those on the ship had lost all hope, God spoke to Paul by an angel, telling him not to be afraid, because he "...*must be brought before Caesar*" (Acts 27:24).¹ At a time when Paul's companions had lost all hope and were completely despondent, God was remembering them and was with them. When Jonah was mad at the world, having a pouty fit and ready to die, God was with him and teaching him a better way. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the NKJV, unless otherwise stated.

thrown into certain death with NO chance of escape, except by the power of God, He stood with them and protected them. How wonderful was the initial attitude of those three men when they answered the king, “...O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. [18] But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Dan. 3:16-18). What a beautiful heart! This is the same type of heart that allowed Joshua to say, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). This is the same type of heart that allowed Peter to say, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14). This is the same type of heart that allowed Jesus the ability to pray, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

What we are really talking about is the omnipresent nature of our God – God is everywhere and every “when”! Moses tells the people of Israel to remain strong and have courage, because it is the Lord that goes with them; God will not leave or forsake them (Deut. 31:6). Jeremiah tells the people of Judah, “*Can anyone hide himself in secret place, so I shall not see him?’ says the Lord; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the Lord*” (Jer. 23:24). The same message is recounted by Paul when upon the Areopagus he tells the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers that the god they worship in ignorance is the God that made the world and everything in it (Acts 17:24). Further, Paul tells them (and us) that God is not far from each of us, “...for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). The really remarkable part of the omnipresence of God isn’t that He is everywhere and every “when,” but that God considers everyone – me and you included – worthy to be remembered and to be cared for. That is why when God saw that we were lost and wandering, He sent us a shepherd. That is why when God saw that we were sick in mind and spirit, He sent us a physician. That is why when God saw that we were completely covered in the stains of our own sins, He sent us a sacrifice. No greater grasp of this can be verbalized than what has already been realized by the apostle Paul, who wrote, “*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom. 8:38-39).

These truths we have looked at are timeless and sure, but there is one place that

our God will not go; God will not go into a heart unwilling to receive Him. In Psalm 81 we find God saying that Israel would not heed His voice, so He “*gave them over*” to do what they desired (Ps. 81:12). Similarly, in Romans 1, we find Paul recounting the sins of the unrighteous, and he says that God “*gave them over*” to a degraded, cheapened, and tarnished mind (Rom. 1:28). In both cases, God could have forced them to bend to His will, but He did not, because He gave them free will. God will not enter a heart where He is not desired! Jesus said, “... *If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*” (Jn. 14:23), and “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*” (Rev. 3:20).

Don't have a heart devoid of God. Let us be ready to receive the Master when He comes, so that when He knocks we can open the door to our heart immediately (Luke 12:35, 36)!

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What is Truth? (Part 3)

Robert Alexander

DeFuniak Springs, Florida

To fully appreciate, and ultimately make proper application of the truth to our lives, it is imperative that we understand how God has designed truth. Let us briefly consider the characteristics of the design of truth.

First, truth is absolute. We live in a world in which men deny the existence of absolute truth, but it exists, in fact: God is truth (Jn. 14:6), and because God is truth, He cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). Since God is truth, and since He cannot lie, it therefore holds that because the Bible is the word of God, which contains characteristics associated with God, the Bible is truth, containing no lies, and therefore is absolute truth. Since truth is absolute, neither time, space nor conditions influence it. The word of God is the absolute standard of truth by which men will one day be judged (Jn. 12:48).

Second, truth has been revealed. If there were no absolute standard of truth, the world would lie in chaos. There would be anarchy. Man would be left to his own devices. Yet, the truth has been revealed; God has “handed it down,” “delivered it to us” in the form of His written word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21) through men of old, guided by the Holy Spirit. The word of God (for man today, the New Testament) is God’s “revelation” to mankind; truth has been made known, and all must hear it, accept it and obey it (Rom. 16:25-26).

Third, truth is inescapable. We live in a day and age in which men deny the existence of absolute truth. To deny that truth exists, however, is to affirm that truth exists. *“If truth exists it is wholly true and irrefutable. If it does not exist, its nonexistence is not true, therefore truth exists, and must exist to say it does not.”*¹

Fourth, truth is unchanging. God is immutable, that is, He cannot, nor does not, change (Mal. 3:6). The Bible is the word of God. Since God is immutable, that is, He cannot, nor does not, change, it is logically conclusive that the Bible, God’s word, neither can, nor will, change. Because the word of God is truth that is immutable, man does not have the right to tamper with it (Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). Some men do try to change God’s word to justify their sinful and shameful behaviors, but the truth cannot be changed! It is unalterable. The Scriptures cannot be broken (Jn. 10:35)!

¹ Does Truth Exist. (n.d.). *Truth Behind Reality*. Retrieved July 22, 2014, from <http://www.truthbehindreality.wordpress.com/2011/01/25/does-truth-exist/>

Fifth, truth is a system. In Jude 3, the inspired writer exhorted those to whom he was writing to “...earnestly contend for *THE* (emp. mine—RA) *faith*.”² The phrase, “the faith,” has reference to that “body,” or “system,” of truth that God has given to mankind. Paul, having declared the power of the Gospel, states that through the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed “*from faith unto faith*” (Rom. 1:17 – ASV 1901). The first phrase refers to the Gospel, which contains God’s plan by which man can be reconciled unto Him, saved from sin by His grace, through faith (cf. Rom. 10:17; Eph. 2:8-9). Men are saved by grace through obedience to *THE* faith, which is that system of salvation so eloquently discussed by the apostle Paul in the Roman epistle.

Sixth, truth can be known. Some make the claim that one “cannot know the truth, but only pursue it.” If this is true, then there is no hope for anyone, because the Bible clearly states that one can be, and will be, “*destroyed for a lack of knowledge*” (Hos. 4:6). Men everywhere CAN know the truth. Paul, writing to the church at Ephesus, said that when they read his words, they “*may understand*,” i.e., know, (Eph. 3:4). Man can come to know the truth, which makes one free from sin (Jn. 8:32). He must, however, possess the kind of heart that is receptive to accepting and obeying the truth (Lk. 8:15).

Seventh, truth is doable. Since truth is knowable, it necessarily follows that truth can be obeyed, because knowledge of God’s word – His will for mankind – gives us the information necessary to obey/do His will (cf. Rom. 10:17; Jas. 1:22,23; Matt. 7:24-27). Knowledge of anything gives us the information we need to carry out certain responsibilities, be they in the home or in the workplace or at school. Mankind MUST come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), and obey that truth, in order to be saved (1 Pet. 1:22-23; Rom. 2:8-11).

Eighth, truth is propositional. Something can only either be true or not true; false or not false. There is no middle ground regarding the truth.

Some positive examples include the following:

1. **Jesus is the Christ, the only begotten Son of God.** This statement is either true, or it is false; there is no middle ground. It is true (Jn. 3:16).
2. **Baptism is for the remission of sins.** Again, this statement is either true, or it is false. It is true (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3,4; 1 Pet. 3:21; Mk. 16:16).

² All Bible quotations are taken from the KJV, unless otherwise stated.

Some negative examples of the concept include the following:

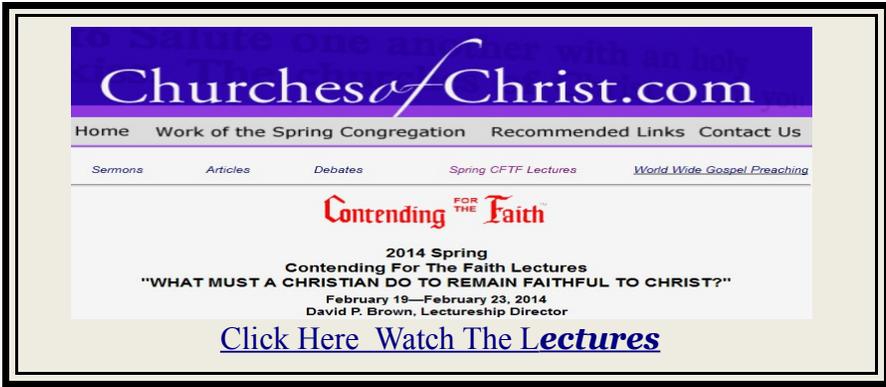
1. **The Lord's Supper may be observed on Wednesday.** This statement is either true, or it is false. It is false (Acts 20:7).
2. **Christians may worship God in any way they so desire.** Again, this statement is either true, or it is false. It is false (Jn. 4:23-24).

All statements are either true or false, they cannot be both true and false. Therefore, in light of the propositional nature of truth, everyone must realize the sobering reality that he or she is either IN Christ, or NOT in Christ.

Ninth, truth is constricting. We cannot go beyond that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV 1901); we must abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 Jn. 9). To go beyond is to “transgress” (2 Jn. 9). We must not add to, nor take away from, the written word (Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:6). We must not “loose where God has not loosed,” e.g., “liberalism,” nor must we “bind where God has not bound,” e.g., “anti-ism,” (Mt. 16:19). We must “handle aright” the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Tenth, truth will judge. Christ, Himself, said: “...*And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*” (Jn. 12:37-38). The word of God—the TRUTH—is the STANDARD by which all men will be judged in the last day.

Next month, we will conclude our study of the question “what is truth?” by looking at the distinction of the truth, and making some concluding observations and exhortations regarding truth.



The image is a screenshot of a website banner. At the top, it says "Churches of Christ.com" in a white serif font on a dark blue background. Below this is a navigation bar with links: "Home", "Work of the Spring Congregation", "Recommended Links", and "Contact Us". Underneath the navigation bar are several smaller links: "Sermons", "Articles", "Debates", "Spring CFTF Lectures", and "World Wide Gospel Preaching". The main content of the banner is centered and features the text "Contending FOR THE Faith" in a red, stylized font. Below this, it says "2014 Spring Contending For The Faith Lectures" and "WHAT MUST A CHRISTIAN DO TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO CHRIST?". It also includes the dates "February 19—February 23, 2014" and the name "David P. Brown, Lectureship Director". At the bottom of the banner, there is a blue link that says "Click Here Watch The Lectures".

A Good Deed

Cougan Collins

Lone Grove, Oklahoma

Many times those who live a life of sacrifice for the Lord, and treat others as God would want us to treat them, will be blessed by others. Even if we never receive a blessing from another person, we can feel great knowing that we have glorified our Father in heaven.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:16).¹ A great example of this comes from Ruth and Naomi. Ruth chose to give up her old ways to help Naomi and to follow after God. Ruth went out to Boaz’s field to glean some grain from it, which is when Boaz noticed her for the first time: “Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, ‘Whose young woman is this?’ So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, ‘It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, “Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.” So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house.’ Then Boaz said to Ruth, ‘You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.’ So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, ‘Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?’ And Boaz answered and said to her, ‘It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.’” (Ruth 2:5-12).

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the KJV, unless otherwise stated.

God made provision for the poor (Lev. 23:22), so men like Boaz would allow them to gather up grain. This encounter, however, goes beyond a typical one, because Boaz heard about how Ruth left her home to take care of Naomi in a country that was not her own.

Her good deed did not go unnoticed. As we will see, it caused her to receive a good deed in return: *“And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, ‘Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her.’ So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied. And her mother-in-law said to her, ‘Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you.’ So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, ‘The man’s name with whom I worked today is Boaz.’ Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, ‘Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!’ And Naomi said to her, ‘This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives’”* (Ruth 2:15-20). Boaz was impressed by Ruth, and he did not want her gleaning from any other field except his. He made sure his men made it easy for her to have as much grain as she needed. As Naomi said, Ruth was blessed because Boaz took notice of her. We know, of course, that this was just the beginning of her blessings, because eventually she would end up getting married to Boaz and giving birth to the grandfather of David, which put Ruth in the lineage of Christ.

Ruth’s story teaches us that great things can happen in our life when we dedicate ourselves to living for God and helping others, as God’s Word teaches us to do. Doing good deeds, however, does not guarantee that something great will happen; many times it does, because people tend to notice those who go out of their way to help others. For example, when you find yourself in need or hurting, then others are most likely going to rise up and help you. Whether or not you receive a blessing from another, please never forget what Paul said in First Corinthians 15:58, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”* Never stop living for the Lord and doing good deeds for others, because it is a good work that will never be done in vain.

The First Principles (Part 2)

Jim Miller

Gray, Maine

Last month we began our study of the “First Principles” by looking at *Who is God*. This month we want to look at the *Word of God*.

We learn from the Scriptures that the word is inspired by God; even the writings of the Old Testament were written by the inspired men whom God had chosen. The New Testament also tells us that this is the case; look at Paul's words to Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17] That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”¹

So, we learn here the following:

1. All Scripture is inspired by God, and;
2. It is to be applied to our lives.

It is only through the word that we come to know God and Christ, and how we are to live our lives pleasing to Him, which will ultimately save us, and through His grace, attain a home in heaven.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12-13).

From this passage we recognize the following:

1. The Word is relevant.

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the KJV, unless otherwise stated.

2. The Word cuts, as compared to a scalpel, capable of cutting the “cancer” of sin out of our lives.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1: 20-21).

From this we notice that the Holy Spirit inspired the men who wrote the books of the Bible, so man has no right to a “private interpretation” of it. There is a saying where I come from: “God said it; I believe it; that settles it.” God “said it” through those men He inspired, and whether or not we believe it, it is already settled. As Christians, we need to teach these principles to those we know, and to those who ask, because it is upon these words that our very souls rest.

We read in John 8:31-32 what Jesus told the Jews of his day, *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* Our guide is neither intellectual belief, nor our own feelings. Everyone must have, and follow, the teachings of Jesus in order to be a true disciple. Sincerity does not equal truth; sincerely religious people can be wrong. It is only through study that we come to know the will of God for us.

There are a lot of traditions that men follow today, in the same way that man always seemed to think that his way was better during the time that Jesus lived among men. As we have seen from the Scriptures above, the word of God is all that is needed; yet, men today still hold fast to things they have been incorrectly taught.

Jesus Christ made it clear that the traditions of men are not to be followed:

“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest

be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt. 15:1-9).

From this passage we discover that we must not hold fast to traditions or creeds, because worship according to tradition, superseding the Word of God, is worship that is in vain.

Let us stop here for now. Next month we will conclude this topic of the “First Principles,” but please, in the mean time, go back over the last two articles, and see how they “fit like a glove,” just as do all of God’s instructions. These lessons may seem very basic to you, but they are sometimes overlooked and not sufficiently taught. Till next time: God Bless you and keep you.

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The Dangers of Realized Eschatology: A Recent Perversion (Part 2)

Eric Farrior

Freeport, Florida

Introduction and an Opening Word¹

A fairly recent doctrine advocated by false teachers such as Max King and Don Preston is the doctrine of Realized Eschatology. Eschatology is the study of final things, thus “realized eschatology” means the belief that all final things have been realized, or come to pass. It saddens me to think that once faithful brethren have fallen into this error.

This lesson is designed to inform and combat such error. This lesson is not designed for good brethren who affirm the early date for the writing of the book of Revelation. Brethren such as Foy Wallace, Bill Cline and Franklin Camp held the early date view of Revelation, yet they never advocated what full Preterists teach. Nor is this lesson designed for good brethren who view that some or most of the N.T. Scriptures have been fulfilled. Nay, this is for the extreme belief that ALL has been fulfilled.

The Resurrection

Strong's defines “resurrection” as “standing up again.”² Since the word “resurrection” is used 40 times in the New Testament Bible, you might think that more attention would be paid to such a term!

For our purposes in this section, let us begin by asking a question: “Did the church of Christ exist before Acts, chapter two?” No. How, then, could it “stand up again” as of Acts, chapter two? In this regard, Realized Eschatologists (R.E.) are forced into an absurd implication; as we noted previously in this study, their doctrine affirms that the church was alive, but then DIED at some point, and then was RISEN again! At what point, between A.D. 30-70, did the church die?

1 Editor's Note: Due to space limitations, the editors have broken the original manuscript into multiple parts, to be continued monthly until completed. It should be noted, in order to maintain consistency, the editors will reprint the introductory material (Introduction and an Opening Word) prior to each new monthly segment.

2 Strong, J. (1995). #386. ἀνάστασις (anastasis). *New Strong's Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc.

Our R.E. friends affirm that the resurrection spoken of in Scripture occurred in A.D. 70. They affirm that it was a resurrection of the “body of Christ” from the oppression of Judaism. It baffles me that folk could miss the Biblical teaching of a bodily resurrection! Notice the following:

“Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:12-23).³

Regarding this passage, notice that Paul was speaking of Jesus' LITERAL resurrection from the dead (v. 4). This was a bodily resurrection, as we read about in the following passages of Scripture:

“He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Mt. 28:6).

“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Lk. 24:39).

What we read there is what Paul emphasized in First Corinthians 15:12-13; furthermore, consider what else Paul had to write on the subject:

“...but some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what

³ All Bible quotations are taken from the KJV, unless otherwise stated.

manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:35-44).

A symbolic resurrection is considered in John 5:25: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live”* (cf. Eph. 2:1ff, Col. 2:13, [available BEFORE A.D. 70, mind you!]).

On the other hand, there is absolutely going to be a DAY when the dead will rise, bodily, according to Jesus' words in John 5:28-29, *“Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.”* This is what the Sadducees rejected (Mt. 22:23). A literal raising of the dead, not a symbolic judgment of a nation! *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”* (Mt. 22:29-32). By the way, the R.E. folk who affirm this doctrine are married...I wonder why?

Next, consider the following:

“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (Jn. 11:23-24).

What resurrection is spoken of here?

“Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go” (Jn. 11:39-44).

“And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:1-2).

What did the Sadducees oppose? They opposed what these inspired men preached, which was the bodily resurrection of the dead through Jesus (cf. Jn. 11:25-26). When Paul preached to folk in Athens; what did he preach?

“Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18).

Of what resurrection was he speaking? To them, it was new (v. 19) and strange (v. 20).

“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter” (Acts 17:32).

Were they mocking because of a symbolic resurrection, or a literal, bodily resurrection?

Finally, notice what is said of those who taught that the resurrection was already past, as these R.E. folk teach:

“But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: or whom is Hymenaeus an Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:16-18).

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Clothed With Power

Doug Post

Vernon, Connecticut

“And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high” (Lk. 24:49).¹

The context of the passage above reveals that Jesus was speaking to His disciples – His apostles. He tells them to wait in the city of Jerusalem until they were “clothed” or “endued” (NKJV) with power from on high. The word “clothed” or “endued” simply means, “to put on, to be clothed, endued, to wear, arrayed with,” (e.g., “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” [Gal. 3:27]). The power was to come “from on high,” literally “out from on high,” which is similar to what we read in Acts 2:17-18, in which we are told that miraculous power would be “poured out” from the Spirit. Both passages are ablative, which is the “genitive of source” case, carrying the idea of “separation” from a source, sometimes called the “from whence case.” In both passages the idea is that power would come out from and away from the source. The source here is Deity, the Spirit of God.

The promise of John concerning being baptized in the Spirit was a general promise announced publicly (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8). It was, however, in no way specifically applied to anyone at the very moment John made it. It was by no means a “universal” promise – a promise made to all people for all time; but, it was designated for someone, as we will see. Let’s note some facts about the context:

1. The promise was made in front of a Jewish audience only (Mt.3:1-3; Lk. 3:4; cf. Lk. 1:76-80). John was sent to Israel (Lk. 1:80), to God’s people (Isa. 40:1-2, 9; Mal. 3:1-4), for the purpose of preparing His people (the Jews) for the coming Messiah (Jn 1:23). Of course, Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 10:6; 15:24), the very same group of people whom John had prepared. Therefore, John’s assignment was for God’s people only – the Jews. This fact, alone, mitigates the promise of

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the ASV1901, unless otherwise stated.

baptism in the Spirit being a universal promise for all people, for all time!

2. Jesus promised the Spirit (Advocate, Counselor, Comforter) to His disciples in John 14, 15, and 16 (the “Upper Room Discourse”), and to no one else. It is in this context that this intimate discussion unfolds between Jesus and His disciples, and only His disciples. He promised THEM the Spirit, who would:
 - (a) Teach them all things (Jn. 14:25).
 - (b) Bring to their remembrance all things Jesus taught them (Jn. 14:25).
 - (c) Testify with only the apostles (Jn. 15:26-27).
 - (d) Be a witness with only the apostles (Jn. 15:26-27; Acts 1:21-22; 5:32).
 - (e) Convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment through them (Jn. 16:8-15).
 - (f) Guide them (the apostles) into all truth, and tell, or reveal, to them (the apostles), things to come (Jn. 16:13).

In addition to Jesus’ instruction that His disciples (apostles) wait in Jerusalem where they would be clothed with power from on high, Luke records further detail in the first chapter of the book of Acts:

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, 'which' He said, 'you have heard from Me.' For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now' ... '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 ends of the earth” (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

Several things must be considered here:

1. Here is self-evident truth concerning “Holy Spirit baptism,” or “being baptized in the Holy Spirit.” There is no opinion about it. No person on earth needs to instruct us on this matter. When we allow the Bible to define itself, then we will recognize the obvious and logical answer. When we read Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4-5 together, we see that Jesus was addressing the very same thing, which was the promise of the Father.
 - (a) In Luke 24:49 He calls this promise “POWER FROM ON HIGH.”
 - (b) In Acts 1:5 He calls the same promise “BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY

SPIRIT.”

- (c) The two phrases are identical, and this is a self-evident truth concerning the matter. “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:8).
2. “Power” is what they would receive, and it would be from the Spirit.
 - (a) Who would receive this power?
 - (b) The apostles, as clearly demonstrated by the context.
3. The phrase “comes upon you” is equal to being “baptized,” or “overwhelmed,” with power from the Spirit. According to A.T. Robertson, “When the Holy Ghost is come upon you (ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς) [is a] genitive absolute and is simultaneous in time with the preceding verb ‘shall receive’ (λήμψεσθε). The Holy Spirit will give them the ‘power’ as he comes upon them. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit referred to in verse 5.”²
4. Therefore, the promise of being baptized in the Holy Spirit was simply the promise of the gift of Apostleship (Eph.4:8-13), which was applied to Christ’s disciples only. That which made them His APOSTLES was that which came from the Holy Spirit - POWER.

These disciples of Jesus became apostles when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, not before. References to the apostles prior to Acts 2 are examples of “prolepsis,” a figure of speech meaning,

“The anticipation and answering of possible objections in rhetorical speech, the representation of a thing as existing before it actually does or did so, as in he was a dead man when he entered.”³

The gift of apostleship was given to Christ’s disciples after His ascension: “*And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues*” (1 Cor. 12:28). God appointed miraculous gifts to be given to certain “offices” and people in the first century. We note that the apostles were to be appointed in the church, and they were to be appointed “FIRST,” before all others. Therefore, their appointment as apostles occurred during the church (not before), which began on Pentecost in Acts 2. Moreover, Paul wrote,

2 Robertson, A. (1930). *The Acts of the Apostles. Word Pictures in the New Testament.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

3 Prolepsis [Def. 1]. (n.d.). Oxford Dictionaries Online, from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/prolepsis.

“Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:8-13). Clearly, the work of an apostle began at the establishment of Christ’s church on Pentecost (Acts 2), of which we know the following:

1. The kingdom was to come with power (Mark 9:1).
2. Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for that power.
3. The promise of being baptized in the Holy Spirit is the same exact thing as receiving power from the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8).
4. When the power came, the church or kingdom would come, and the kingdom came with power on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) upon the apostles who were waiting in Jerusalem, which is an undeniable fact.

When the power came, the kingdom came (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-16), and when the kingdom came with power on Pentecost, that power came upon the apostles waiting in Jerusalem. However, let’s note some things about this event. Understanding that the phrases “baptized in the Spirit” and “clothed with power” are equivalent (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8), made equivalent by Jesus, Himself, demonstrates the context, which reveals that the apostles received power, or were baptized in the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, the fulfillment of which is found in Acts 2:1-4. There are several facts, however, which solidify the fact that being baptized in the Holy Spirit was only for the apostles.

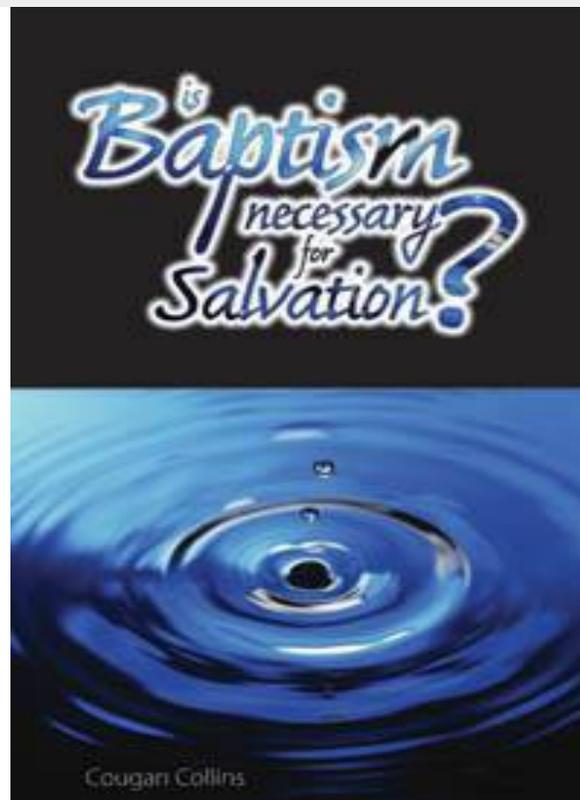
1. We know that the word “they” in Acts 2:1 has as its antecedent “apostles” in Acts 1:26.
2. In Acts 2:7, we read that all the people were amazed saying, “*Look are not all these who speak Galileans?*” The word “these” is the Greek word οὗτοι, a masculine plural pronoun, as identified by the suffix. In Greek this becomes “these men.”
3. We also note that the crowd had identified “these men” as “Galileans.” The Lord’s men were from the region of Galilee, which these people

understood immediately, which rules out the following:

- (a) “The 120” being baptized in the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:15).
- (b) The women being baptized in the Holy Spirit, since it was men only.
- (c) The Gentiles being baptized in the Holy Spirit, since no apostles were Gentiles.
 - i. Certainly, the Pentecost crowd was wholly Jewish, gathered for the observing of Pentecost.
 - ii. Luke plainly tells us: “*And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven*” (Acts 1:5).

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Love's Story

Archie R. Green

Glenn Heights, Texas

There has been no greater ideal given unto mankind than love, and love is the epitome of what has formed the relationship bond between God and His creation. God so loved us that he gave His son to die for our sins (Heb. 2:9) He also did this not because we merited any great thing on our own, but because He first loved us (Rom. 5:6-8). His love for mankind has and will endure for all time (Eph. 2:12-22)

When speaking of love, one of the best provisions that God bestowed upon His creation is His recognition that we cannot understand how lost we might become without proper companionship. The Bible teaches us that we are made in the very image of God (Gen. 1:27). He breathed into us the breath of life and we became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). Being clothed in flesh, God looked forward in time, and realized that a companion was best suited to help man make it to Heaven.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18).¹

Paul makes the following statement in First Corinthians 7:7: *“For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.”* God’s apostle apparently did not have a strong desire to be in a marriage relationship. He was able to endure and uphold the will of God in his single state. Commendable. Most of us born of woman do not possess this rare gift. Mankind, over the course of history, has held a strong inclination towards acquiring a partner, because God deemed it so. This is our first clear teaching of God’s “Love Story” for you and me, as it concerns marriage. The wise man once penned, *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD”* (Pr. 18:22). I’m sure that many of our sisters in Christ are clamoring for God’s favor, and a good man, as well. Humanity, however, does not understand this basic truth. Our own American society is racked with pretentious ideas on marriage, divorce and remarriage, but our children, and their children, deserve to know God’s precepts from

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the KJV, unless otherwise stated.

Heaven. For the first time in history, more Americans are unmarried than are married. Many people have disparaged matrimony as an archaic and useless tradition originating from man, but this is not so. Jesus reminds those in His day that marriage is of God.

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”

(Mt. 19:4-5).

God ushered from the garden the law of one man, for one woman, for life. Marriage was God’s first institution on this earth, and it was for our benefit! It predates the church, as well as civil government. It is, therefore, eternal, and cannot be usurped. In this twain nuptial, we are to honor each other, love each other, respect each other, support each other, and revere God in doing so (1 Pet. 3:1-7; Eph. 5:20-25, 28-29, 33). God loves a “cheerful giver,” and that principle also applies in the marriage bond.

The second tier in God’s “Love Story” for us is that all sexual activity belongs IN marriage. The Bible condemns all unlawful carnal acts. God gave us the opportunity to have a physical relationship within this life, resulting in great joy, while allowing us to remain at peace with God. Paul records in First Corinthians 7:2, *“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”* He states that there is no commandment for all men to get married; the very clear command he issues is that sex remain between those who are married. All sex outside of a proper bond of marriage is fornication, and all fornicators will meet their end at the hand of a righteous judge (1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:19-21). Not very many people would argue against the fact that a corporeal relationship here on earth is wonderful, and in its proper context, amazing. Next to having an affiliation with God and His Son, Jesus, marriage is the second greatest relation that we can achieve in this world. Our children need to understand that any sexual activity outside of marriage, which is glorified in almost every advertisement, movie, television show or neighbor’s house, is the antithesis of what God has ordained for us. We are to be individually, and collectively, a sacrifice that is holy and acceptable unto God (Rom. 12:1). Furthermore, Paul wrote in First Corinthians 6:18-20, *“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that*

your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The Lord's church is giving insufficient attention to this topic. I pray that we have not grown tired of the "good message" this brings those who have been lost and corrupted by the misuse of sex and their bodies in this world. I also pray that Gospel preachers and teachers have not become afraid to consistently offer this wonderful message to our children, before they impair their chances at becoming Elders, Deacons and faithful children of God.

The final tier in God's "Love Story" for mankind and marriage comes from Malachi 2:14-15, "*Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.*" God reminds Israel that He did not draw them out of Egypt, to protect them and to love them, just so that they might seek after other gods, which are no gods at all! (Jer. 2:11-13). Our Heavenly Father desires Christ-like households that raise faithful children (Deut. 6:20-25). We are also advised throughout Scripture that the taking of innocent life through abortion is sinful (Lev. 17:11). A child's worth can never be written in the form of "o's" thru palimony or alimony. Unmerited divorce makes a mockery of God and His establishment. The offspring of divorce will many times discount God and His ordinances, because the household in which they grew up denied the truth, making those parents to be poor examples (Pr. 22:6). The Bible nowhere leads one to understand that God has "grandchildren"; God only has children, those who have been born of godly seed, joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:14, 16-17), and are those who have been encouraged by the will of God for the anchoring of the Kingdom (Eph. 6:1-4).

As each generation passes thru, the urgency should grow to teach and admonish them to stand firm in the will of God. The attack on Biblical marriage, with what the world calls "love," is abominable and will not cease any time soon. Do you love God enough to hold fast to His declaration in Hebrews 10:22-23, "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised...)*" I pray that we all will do so. God Bless.

Christ: Our Resurrection

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“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:20-21).¹

The book of John is a powerful demonstration of Christ, the Son of God. Within this book we find confirmation that Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be. In fact, it was because of Jesus’ testimony, accompanied with signs, that the writer of Hebrews would ask, “...*how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will*” (Heb. 2:3-4)?

In the book of John, one astonishing proof showing that Jesus is the Christ was the resurrection of Lazarus in chapter 11. It is in this chapter that Jesus claims to be “the resurrection” and “the life.” As we study this passage, four aspects of Christ will stand out clearly.

The first aspect concerns the priorities of Jesus. How does Jesus react to the news that Lazarus is ill? Notice, first, that nowhere in the text does Jesus *blame* God for this circumstance. He does not say that God made Lazarus sick. This becomes an important distinction when Jesus does say, in verse four, that this sickness does not lead to death, but that it does lead to the glorification of God. Jesus sees and understands this situation is an opportunity to glorify God! What do those around Jesus expect Him to do? At least four times in this chapter people expected Jesus to perform a miracle in order to heal sick Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-4, 21, 32, 37). Even those who may have been antagonistic toward Jesus could not deny what He could do! Did Jesus have power to heal Lazarus when he was sick? Yes, absolutely! Jesus, however, knew there was something important and definitive to show these people at this time. Three key passages in this chapter help us to see Christ’s Focus:

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the NKJV, unless otherwise stated.

John 11:4 *“When Jesus heard that, He said, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’”*

John 11:15 *“And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”*

John 11:40-42 *“Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.’”*

Jesus' life, even when clouded by pain and loss, was always focused clearly on God and His glory! Jesus said that Lazarus will live again! And, when Martha shows a beautiful amount of faith in the final resurrection, Jesus says something amazing in verses 25-26, to which Martha can only respond, *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world”* (Jn. 11:27)! Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and without minimizing or trivializing the loss and pain of Mary, Martha, and all those who were mourning over Lazarus, Jesus points directly to God as the source of hope. His priorities are God and His glory.

The second aspect that John shows concerning Jesus is His compassion. Some tasks are so tedious and downright annoying that we will do everything in our power to avoid them. For some, that task might be washing dishes, or going to the DMV, or preparing for tax season, etc. Such tasks, however, eventually get accomplished, because they are necessary; indeed, that is the *only* reason we might do them. Imagine if our Savior felt that being “the resurrection” and “the life” was a tedious and annoying task – one that He *had* to do because, well, He *had* to. We know, of course, that it was not the case! One interesting repetition in John 12 is the compassion and care that Jesus had for people. Three verses specifically emphasize this fact, in which we see the following:

1. Jesus loved Lazarus (Jn. 11:3, 5, 36).
2. Twice, Jesus was deeply moved emotionally (Jn. 11:32-33, 38); in one of the shortest verses of the Bible, we read two simple words that exemplify the compassion of our Lord: Jesus wept (Jn. 11:35).
3. Jesus risked His life for His friend (Jn. 11:7-8, 11).

Yes, we are given clear indication that we have a Savior that cares!

The third aspect from John about Jesus concerns His Power.

“Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth” (Jn. 11:43).

With three simple words, the one who was dead came out of the tomb. The word, through whom all creation exists, and in whom is found life, spoke, *“Lazarus, come forth,”* and he did (Jn. 11:1-4). The power of Jesus cannot be denied! Recognize, also, that in verse 8 the disciples warned Jesus to avoid the trip, because the Jews had wanted to stone Him. Even *they*, however, could not deny His power, and many believed Him after that day (Jn. 11:45); even those who hated Jesus could not deny this miracle (Jn. 11:46-48). Jesus is powerful! He is so powerful that some have suggested that had Jesus failed to specifically use the name of Lazarus, then everyone from the dead would have risen on that day! How amazing it is to know that our Savior was not only a good man, but also the One who has power over death! Jesus: our Resurrection!

The fourth, and final aspect that we will consider in this context was Jesus' identity. Throughout this chapter Jesus indicates that the events taking place were for the glory of God, and that something would happen because of these events (Jn. 11:1-4, 15, 24-27, 42, 45). Remember that the purpose of the book of John was to bring about faith in Christ, thereby providing the opportunity for life! What does this all mean? Because of who Jesus is, Christians do not have to fear death! Furthermore, Jesus is our life (Gal. 2:20). Even from our text we read more about Jesus than just “a resurrection”; we read that He *is* “the resurrection, and that He *is* “the life”! For the Christian, that which was old is dead, and in its place is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Rom. 6:1-6). Truly Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our resurrection and our life!

“Is the church of Christ a ‘cult’”? (Part 2)

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In part one of this article, we provided a few definitions of the word “cult,” which included the following.

“A cult is generally defined as any religious group which has specific practices, beliefs, or organizational structures which control its members through dishonest, deceptive, extreme, or invasive methods.”¹

“A small religious group that is not part of a larger and more accepted religion and that has beliefs regarded by many people as extreme or dangerous.”²

“A religion or religious sect generally considered to be extremist or false, with its followers often living in an unconventional manner under the guidance of an authoritarian, charismatic leader.”³

“A small, recently created, religious organization which is often headed by a single charismatic leader and is viewed as an (sic) spiritually innovative group.”⁴

In last month's issue it was noted that readers with even a basic understanding of the church of Christ should recognize that the verbiage contained in these definitions cannot possibly be applied to the churches of Christ. This month we will continue our examination of this issue by comparing and contrasting the church of Christ against those multiple definitions of the term “cult.” Let us begin...

1. The 21st century “churches of Christ” have no central governing authority considered to be “headquarters.” Each individual congregation, of which

1 Miller, M. “Is the Church of Christ a cult?” Truth Magazine.

2 Cult. (n.d.). Retrieved June 28, 2014, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

3 Cult. (n.d.). Retrieved June 28, 2014, from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>

4 Definition of terms: cults, sects, denominations. (n.d.). Definition of terms: cults, sects, denominations. Retrieved June 28, 2014, from <http://www.religioustolerance.org/cults.htm>

there are thousands, appoints its own elders (see Acts 20:17, 28), its own deacons, and its own preacher(s), and so there is no nationally-recognized “head” of the church of Christ; compare this structure and organization with those “churches” that are headed by Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham or Joel Osteen. Because of the autonomy of the thousands of congregations of churches of Christ, there is minimal chance for any one individual to ever assume undue control or influence over the churches of Christ, regardless how charismatic, charming, or influential he might be. This is not to say, however, that the churches of Christ have not had some very influential men over the years. Names such as David Lipscomb, Marshall Keeble, Batsell Barrett Baxter, Foy Wallace, Ira North, Leo Boles, and others were extremely well-known over the past few generations; in our own generation, we recognize some preachers and scholars for their outstanding work and influence, such as Mid McKnight, Everett Ferguson, Johnny Robertson, David Hester and many others. None of these men, however, have any authority to exert control over the churches of Christ; they only have authority to exert some level of control over their own specific congregation, and then only to the extent that God has given them such authority. We do not follow the dictates or decrees of men; we follow the words of Jesus. No blind and unwavering loyalty is pledged to preachers or church leaders. This is completely at odds with “cult” methodology.

2. The church of Christ and its “Restoration” principles rest on a fairly simple doctrine: “To speak where the Bible speaks and to remain silent where the Bible is silent.” On certain topics, individual congregations may certainly differ slightly, or even substantially, but the majority holds similar views on topics such as the unacceptability of instrumental music in worship, the appropriate role of women in the church, etc.; such a mindset is entirely at odds with the whims of a dictatorial and tyrannical “cult” leader.
3. The “church of Christ” is NOT a “new” denomination, historically speaking (cf. Romans 16:16, as well as Keith Sisman’s work, *Traces of the Kingdom*). It should be noted that the efforts of men, such as Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone, were focused on restoring worship to its first-century formulas; in their view, protestant worship of the 19th century had largely deteriorated into apostasy, and these types of efforts and attitudes, especially on issues such as instrumental music and support for orphans, would serve as the fulcrum for a split between the “Disciples

of Christ,” and the “church of Christ.” The “recently created” prerequisite for a cult, described in the definition from “Religious Tolerance” website, obviously does not apply to the church of Christ.

4. Members of the church of Christ are certainly not expected, or forced, to sell off their possessions for the benefit of a “leader.” Members can, and do, contribute to the functioning of the church, and to mission-related operations as they individually see fit, and as they have individually prospered. There is no set “tithing” quota, and NO dogmatic demands for the surrender of any, or all, material wealth, which is yet another frequent aspect of a “cult.”
5. The overwhelming majority of “cults” are quite small in membership, which is an obvious necessity for one seeking zealously to seize and control a group of people. The “church of Christ” has some 1.6 million adherents across the United States⁵, with approximately 13,000 individual congregations. Many specific congregations exceed 1,000 in membership, and in some cases, 2,000 people. Churches of Christ have established universities (Harding University, Abilene Christian University, Oklahoma Christian University, Lubbock Christian University, and others), preacher training schools (Sunset Institute for Biblical Studies, Brown Trail School of Preaching, etc.) and multiple publishers and organizations. These demographic numbers and facts certainly indicate a well-established, mainstream following, not a small, fringe grouping controlled by one leader.
6. Members of individual congregations can and do change congregations, for a plethora of differing reasons. Implied or clearly stated threats are a common, frequent, and highly effective method that cults utilize to prevent members from departing; some cults will utilize family pressure, and the threat of losing one’s family relationships permanently as “punishment” for betrayal of the cult. When a person departs a “church of Christ,” I have never once seen or heard of them being threatened, harassed, stalked, or otherwise intimidated by church members.

In next month's *The Keys of the Kingdom*, we will conclude our examination of this very important topic.

⁵ Churches of Christ in the United States. (2006). Nashville, TN: 21st Century Christian.

Who Do YOU Say I Am...?

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“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?’” (Mt. 16:13-15).¹

Having accomplished my objective over the last few months, which was to adequately prove that the God of our Bible is the one, TRUE, God, responsible for creating the universe, and everything in the universe, up to and including mankind, my next objective will be to answer this most important question, asked by Jesus of Nazareth, Himself: “...*Who do you say that I am?*” (Mt. 16:15).

Many people – past and present – will, on the one hand, deny that Jesus is Deity (that is, God – part of the triune god-head spoken of in the Bible), while, on the other hand, affirming, with great enthusiasm, that Jesus was a *good* and *moral* teacher, from whom we may learn much about kindness, love and proper behavior. One man who has affirmed this is the atheist, Richard Dawkins, who said in an interview that, “Jesus was a great moral teacher...[and] somebody as intelligent as Jesus would have been an atheist if he had known what we know today”² What nonsense!

Conversely, C.S. Lewis wrote in his book, *Mere Christianity*, that the number of possibilities concerning Jesus is limited; he wrote:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a

1 All Bible quotations are taken from the NKJV, unless otherwise stated.

2 Hallowell, B. (2011, October 25). Richard Dawkins: ‘Jesus Would Have Been an Atheist if He Had Known What We Know Today’. The Blaze. Retrieved July 31, 2014, from <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2011/10/25/richard-dawkins-jesus-would-have-been-an-atheist-if-he-had-known-what-we-know-today/>

poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”³

Mr. Lewis is absolutely correct! Logically speaking, Lewis exhausted all possibilities concerning Jesus. Notice Jesus' own words in the following passage of Scripture:

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. “And where I go you know, and the way you know.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:1-6).

If Jesus is not Deity, then it is impossible for His words, above, to be true, in which case it is either a lie, or the delusions of an insane man. If it is the former, a lie, then Jesus would be immediately disqualified from being considered a good, moral teacher, for one who is a liar is neither good, nor moral. If it is the latter, the ramblings of a madman, then Jesus is disqualified from consideration as being a teacher, for an incompetent person certainly cannot be trusted to be an educator of sound knowledge and wisdom. Jesus, therefore, is either a liar (a fraud, unable to fulfill his promises), a lunatic (a psychotic, unable to discern fantasy from reality), or Deity (God, who is able to fulfill those promises). Recognize that ONE of these premises is *necessarily* true, while the other two premises are *necessarily* untrue, because they cannot all be true, nor can they all be false, for the possibilities expressed exhaust all possibilities that might be considered.

All that is left is a decision; one that each person must make. *Who do YOU say that Jesus is?*

³ Lewis, C. S. (1963). *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan. p.41