



# UNMASKING SOPHISTRY

**A Journal of Christian Evidences and Comparative Religions**

**OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 2022 | VOLUME 2 | NO. 4**

**"See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with the elementary principles of the world, rather than in accordance with Christ."  
(Colossians 2:8, NASB)**

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# From The Editor's Desk

This is the fifth issue of Unmasking Sophistry Magazine published in the year 2022 and it is the eighth edition published since its inception. We thank God for the strength and enablement. As usual, this journal is designed to teach the truth of God's Word as well as expose the various arguments that have been prepared in defense of false religion and arguments designed to oppose the Christian faith. In order to cover a wide range of areas, various sections have been created in this journal, and topics relating to each of the sections will be discussed in every edition in a consistent manner.

In the last edition of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections such as *The Sign of Jonah & Christ's Resurrection*; *Religious Attires: What Should the Christians Wear?* *A Discourse on Eternal Life: Present Possession or Future Possession?* *The Church At The End Of The First Century*; *A Graduate of Any Recognized Bible College*; *What America Needs*; *Teaching The Next Generation*; *Judge Not, That Ye Be Not Judged*; *How God Turned A Curse Into A Blessing*; *How Can A Person Work Righteousness?* *Most Believers Just Do What Is Expected Of Them By Their Congregations*; *The Law Of Tithe - Is it for Christians?*; *How Do I Choose A Church?*; and other intriguing topics. We appreciate all the lovely feedback received from our dear readers. Please, we would like to hear more from you.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?*; *Was Jesus Created?*; *A Discourse on The AD 70 Doctrine*; *Early Persecutions*; *Drinking Moderately*; *Modest Dressing For Our Children*; *A Model Of Good Deeds*; *Should We Pray To Cover Ourselves With The Blood Of Jesus?*; *Institutionalism*; *A Crisis In Christianity*; *The Prosperity Gospel*; and other intriguing topics.

You are warmly reminded that **Unmasking Sophistry Magazine** is available online and all editions (past and present) can be accessed and downloaded online at [www.unmaskingsophistry.com/downloads](http://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/downloads)

The open-door policy of the magazine is still very much intact – if anyone disagrees with an article in any edition of the magazine, such could write a rebuttal to it and we would be willing to publish it in the same issue which the article he is replying appeared. Alternatively, a proposition will be set for the writer of the article and whoever dissents to affirm and deny respectively as the case may be – with the aim of knowing the truth on the subject matter.

Once again, all the prayers, feedback, and encouragement from readers are duly appreciated. We would continue to hold fast the pattern of sound words which we have heard from the apostles, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 1:13; Acts 2:42).

God's Love and Blessings

**Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba**  
Editor

# CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

## Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

God could have created Adam and Eve as robots. He could have programmed into them whatever commands He wanted them to do, just as we may do a computer or some other machine. But God didn't want a bunch of robots running around performing His commands by the pushing of a button.

One of the frequent questions I get, often from young people, is "If there is a God, why is there so much evil in the world? Why do we have children starving in Africa? Why are women raped and murdered by marauding men? Why are innocent people mowed down by a deranged madman?" These are legitimate questions, and demand a thoughtful and reasoned answer. My answer seeks to respond in reasoned terms that all can comprehend.

Some years ago, I had a car. Even though it was old and had over 300,000 miles on it, it always obeyed me. It turned left or stopped at my simple command. It didn't argue back or refuse to move. But it was a machine, a robot. It had no choice. It only did what it was programmed to do. It did not love me, and did not even know who I was.

My wife and I have five children. When they were young, they usually obeyed me, but not always. But if I had to make a choice between my children and my car, it really wouldn't require any thought. I would choose my children. I had a relationship with my children. I loved them and they returned my love. The fact that they had a choice, and still responded to my directions is because they loved and respected me.

God could have created Adam and Eve as robots. He could have programmed into them whatever commands He wanted them to do, just as we may do a computer or some other machine. But God didn't want a bunch of robots running around performing His commands by the pushing of a button. He wanted a creation that He could love, and that would love and respect Him in return.

The only way God could have such a creation was for that creation to have free will—the freedom to choose. That was a risk that my wife and I took when we brought children into the world. What would our children become? We had faith that they would make good choices through our guidance, but since they had freedom of choice, there was the risk they would go the other way. And thus it was with God's creation.

Sadly, through the centuries that have passed since Adam and Eve were created, and since Noah and Mrs. Noah started over, too many have made wrong choices. Please understand that all the evil that is in the world is here because of Satan, not God. And we must suffer the consequences of the sin that is in the world. Yes, even the innocent suffers. One of the immutable laws in the universe is that of cause and effect, action and consequences. When we break the law, there are consequences to be borne. When a drunk gets behind the wheel of a car and runs down a little girl on her tricycle, the innocent suffers. When a deranged young man seeks revenge for his supposed mistreatment and kills 32 others, the innocent suffers.

We understand the law of action and consequences in civil law. Rob a bank and go to jail. When you break the laws of God and nature, there are consequences. Our task is to teach as many as possible to make the right decisions in life, i.e., to obey the Prince of Peace and thus overcome Satan. And we must remember that all evil in the world is caused by Satan and the bad decisions he causes men to make. But we must also remember that no matter what evil comes upon us, God will give us the strength to endure. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

# CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

## Was Jesus Created By God?

By Samuel Matthews | Oregon, USA

"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 by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). KJV

Loved one, is there a possibility that before the Universe was created that God, the "Ancient of days," was all alone and that out of his own being he brought into existence the Word, who eventually became Jesus Christ? No, that is NOT a concept that can be harmonized with Bible truth.

Consider the following:  
No other God before or after...

Jehovah God explicitly declares that no other God existed — either before or after Him. Note the testimony of Isaiah:

"Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no God" (Isa. 43:10-11).

Christ is eternal. Eternality is a prime characteristic of one who possesses the nature of deity. God is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psa. 90:2).

He is the "high and lofty One who inhabits eternity" (Isa. 57:15). Now, inasmuch as it is clear that the divine Word (Christ — Jn. 1:1, 14) possesses the nature of deity, one must conclude that he is intrinsically eternal.

### Declared eternal in prophecy

The Old Testament explicitly declared the eternal nature of the preincarnate Christ. Isaiah refers to the "Prince of Peace" as "everlasting" (Isa. 9:6).

The prophet Micah says that, in reality, the "goings forth" of the Bethlehem baby have been from "of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2).

### New Testament Testimony

The New Testament is equally clear in this matter. Three times in John 1:1 the apostle employs the imperfect tense verb *en* (rendered "was") to denote the "timeless existence" of the sacred person known as the Word. The eternal existence of the pre-incarnate antedates "the beginning," to which John alludes, in this passage.

### Jesus claimed eternity

Jesus himself affirmed His eternal existence when he said to the Jews: "Before Abraham was born, I AM" (Jn. 8:58). The present tense form, *ego eimi* ("I am") stands in contrast to the aorist form "was born" (*genesthai* — to begin to be, to come into existence). The two expressions contrast the eternal and the temporal.

The Jews certainly understood what Christ said, i.e., that He claimed eternity, therefore, the status of being God. That is why they sought to stone him. The expression "I am" points one back to Exodus 3:14, where Jehovah identifies Himself as the "I AM," i.e., the self-existent One.

### The first and the last, the "always living One"

In the book of Revelation, Jesus claims that He is "the first and the last, and the Living [present participle — always living] one" (Rev. 1:17-18). He is also the "Alpha and the Omega" — first and last letters in the Greek alphabet (22:13; cf. 1:8; 21:6). These phrases assert the eternal nature of the One so described, and are applied in these texts to either God the Father, or



to Christ. It is NOT biblical, therefore, to assert that the second Person of the Godhead had a “beginning” in any way.

Unfortunately, those of the Watchtower persuasion teach the heresy that God created Jesus originally. People following the Jehovah's Witnesses doctrines say Revelation 3:14 proves that Jesus was the first one to be created.

These are sincere and zealous people, but they are wrong on many religious issues, not the least of which is their denial that Jesus Christ possesses the nature of deity. They subscribe to the dogma that Christ was nothing more “than a perfect man” (Let God Be True, p. 87).

In the same work, the Watchtower Witnesses contend:

“The truth of the matter is that the Word is Jesus Christ [see Jn. 1:1, 14], who did have a beginning; because, at Revelation 3:14, he distinctly states that he was the beginning of the creation of God” (p. 88).

There are two points that reveal the fallacy of the Watchtower contention.

(1) No interpretation can be assigned to Revelation 3:14 that makes it conflict with other clear passages that affirm the eternal nature of the Lord Jesus.

For example, the prophet Micah declared that though a baby would be born in Bethlehem, nonetheless his existence was “from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2). This expression asserts the “eternity” of the Son of God. Micah's prophecy was fulfilled by the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (see Mt. 2:5-6).

In John's Gospel record, three times in 1:1 the apostle employs the imperfect tense verb *en*. “In the beginning was [*en*] the Word [Christ, v. 14], and the Word was [*en*] with God, and the Word was [*en*]

God.” The imperfect tense here denotes the “timeless existence” of the Second Person of the Godhead.

John's use of the imperfect form conveys no idea of origin for God or for Christ; rather, it reflects continuous existence for both of these divine beings. These are but a sampling of the evidence that establishes the eternal existence of Jesus Christ.

(2) The term “beginning,” as employed in Revelation 3:14, does not suggest a commencement in time for Jesus Christ. The Greek word that is rendered “beginning” in Revelation 3:14 is *ARCHE*. The term is employed in various senses in Greek literature. It may refer to the “beginning” of something if there is evidence available that the “something” indeed had a beginning, e.g., in “the beginning of the gospel” (Mk. 1:1). But this certainly does not exhaust the meaning of the expression.

*ARCHE* can also signify the “first cause,” of a thing, or that by which something “begins to be,” i.e., the originating source. In Revelation 3:14 *ARCHE* is used of Christ as the uncreated principle, the active cause of creation. The term in this text is NOT to be understood as the first of created things.

(3) In Revelation 22:13, Christ refers to himself as the “beginning [*arche*] and the end [*telos*].” If “beginning” suggests that there was a time when Christ did not exist, but that he came into existence as the first being of God's creation, does “end” indicate that there will be a point at which the Savior will go out of existence? The question hardly needs a response.

In Isaiah 48:12 the Lord God described himself as “the first” and “the last.” Did he mean to indicate that there was a time when he did not exist? The very idea is absurd.

The Watchtower Society is grievously in error in its doctrine that Jesus Christ was a “created” being; even their contention that he was the FIRST created being. They say, “Jesus Christ was the first creature made by God the Father.” They cite as proof Colossians 1:15, where Jesus is said to be the “firstborn of all creation,”

The Watchtower dogma, that Jesus was the first being created by the Father and, therefore, He is not eternal in his nature, is a totally false teaching. The following points indisputably refute the “Witness” claim.

### **Firstborn: Preeminence**

The Greek word for “firstborn” is *prototokos*, a term with roots in the Old Testament. When the word is used literally, it can denote the first that comes from the womb, whether of man or beast (cf. Ex. 13:2).

Frequently, however, “firstborn” is an expression of rank, or preeminence, and the original linguistic components (“first” and “born”) no longer play any role in the meaning (e.g., Ex. 4:22).

A clear example of this is seen in Jeremiah 31:9, where “Ephraim” (a symbol for the kingdom of Israel) is called the Lord’s “firstborn,” although literally Manasseh, Ephraim’s older brother, was the “firstborn” (Gen. 48:14). In this context “firstborn” is employed as a designation for primacy (cf. Gen. 48:19).

The Israelite people referred to Jehovah as *becorosheloam*, “the firstborn of all the world,” or of “all creation,” which expression signified the Lord’s role as the creator of all things.

In Psalm 89, God said regarding David, though ultimately the reference is to Jesus, David’s illustrious offspring, “Also I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth” (v. 27; cf. Rev. 1:5).

The fact that this kingly One is to be appointed

(future tense) as a “firstborn” is conclusive evidence that a point of origin is NOT in view.

### **Firstborn: Not in Origin**

The world’s ripest scholars of New Testament Greek are virtually unanimous in their opposition to the claims of the Watchtower Society. They say, “Firstborn” (Col. 1:15) does not indicate the origin of the Second Person of the Godhead.

There is a precise Greek word to indicate the “first” of a particular created order; it is the term *proto-ktistos*. This word is defined as meaning “founded or created first.” This is not the term employed by Paul to depict Christ in the Colossian context, though the apostle had a term available should he have wanted to make that point. That he did not is significant.

*Prototokos* in Colossians 1:15 emphasizes a “superiority of essence,” and it does not suggest that Christ is a part of the creation himself, but [he] stands rather in a unique relationship to God, the ‘invisible.’

The “for” clause (that begins verse 16) provides the explanation for the term “firstborn,” namely that ALL THINGS owe their creation to Christ’s mediation. The point is NOT that Christ is the first creature; rather, the thought being emphasized is “Christ’s supremacy over creation.”

Moreover, since the apostle affirms that Jesus created all things, it would follow logically that if he himself were a created being, he must have made himself!

Recognizing this necessary though absurd conclusion, the Watchtower Society presumptively inserted the term “other” into the New World Translation at verse 16; “because by means of him all [other] things were created.” Their use of brackets reveals an awareness that there is no textual basis for the insertion.



### **Firstborn: Preeminent in His Resurrection**

Finally, the use of “firstborn” in verse 18 sheds light on the foregoing text. The Savior is described as “the firstborn from the dead” (cf. Rev. 1:5).

Jesus was NOT the “firstborn from the dead” as a consequence of being the first one ever to be raised from the dead. There were resurrections from death in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Kgs. 17:8-24), and during the personal ministry of the Lord (cf. Jn. 11:17ff).

Christ is “firstborn from the dead” in that He demonstrated his power over the grave. He was even instrumental in effecting His own resurrection (Jn. 2:19). Further, unlike others, who were resurrected, Jesus was raised to die “no more” (Rom. 6:9). He is the ever-living one who now has the “keys” over both death and Hades (Rev. 1:18).

There is simply no justification for the notion that the pre-incarnate Word (Jn. 1:1,14) was a created being. The God of Heaven is so good. We love you so much.

### **WORSHIP PLEASING TO GOD**

Reverence and sanctity that once characterized worship services in days gone by seems to have come and gone. Today it seems many come to entertain and to be entertained. One preacher even said from the pulpit: “We are here to entertain God.” Frivolity has become an all too frequent part of many lessons and sermons. People like to be entertained and there are those who are more than willing to oblige. Jesus, in His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well said: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (See Jn. 4:21-24).

True worshippers are those who worship God sincerely, genuinely, and intelligently, as opposed to those who worship mechanically, ceremonially and ritualistically. True worship is rendered “in spirit and truth,” i. e., sincerely and in harmony with His will. This tells us not all worship is pleasing to God. Thus, it is possible to worship God, and yet not worship in spirit and truth, and thus unacceptably.

To worship God in “spirit” involves our attitude and our commitment in His service. If our heart is not in the proper frame-of-mind, then we will not be able to worship “in spirit.” Worship is “spiritual.” i.e., it is the sacrifice of a humble, contrite, grateful and adoring spirit. All Christians are priests and, as such, offer up spiritual sacrifices to God who is loved and adored.

Worship is not about the individual, or the physical location; it is not the “where” but “how” to worship that is pleasing to God. The place of worship makes no difference today. One can worship in Paris as well as in Palestine, in Johannesburg as well as in Jerusalem.

To worship God in “truth” relates to how well worship follows the acceptable pattern revealed in God's Word. One may worship the true God, but still not be in harmony with the truth of His will (READ Matt. 15: 1-9). These worshipped God, but their worship was neither in “spirit” or in “truth.” In conclusion then, worship must be correct in both SPIRIT (with the right attitude) and in TRUTH (according to God's Word). Think on these things.

**- Dennis Abernathy**

# WORLD RELIGIONS



## Gay Marriage

By Patrick Donahue | Alabama, USA

**"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?" (Matthew 19:4-5)**


Any passage that condemns homosex would automatically condemn gay marriage, because sex is an integral part of marriage (I Corinthians 7:2-5). And there are plenty of passages that condemn homosexuality. Romans 1:24,26-27 destroys the gay church's contention that the Bible approves of their practice. It reads, "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves ... For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."

Romans 1 not only proves homosex is a sin, but three times it calls the practice unnatural. That is, we could know homosex is not what was intended by our creator even without the Bible. The physical anatomies of a man and a woman tell us what is supposed to happen sexually. In plumbing you have to join a male part to a female part. Everybody knows it won't work otherwise. See the parallel?

I once read a Yale and Columbia Universities study which found homosexuality common to only 6.7% of male identical twins and 5.3% of female identical twins. If being gay was genetic, it should have been 100%. They have the same genes, right? So gays are not born that way. Instead their sexual thinking/attraction/orientation has become perverted.

But what does God say about Gay Marriage specifically? When I have debated the gay church they usually claim Jesus personally said nothing against it. But doesn't Matthew 19:4-5 speak to the issue? There Jesus said "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?" Jesus quotes from the beginning to say marriage should be between male and female. The familiar cutesy saying makes a good point: "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

Compare Matthew 19:4-5 with this quote "The Presbyterian Church ... voted to redefine the church constitution on marriage to include a commitment between two people ..." (Time Magazine, 3-18-2015). Notice they've changed God's (and their) definition of marriage from a "commitment between a man and a woman" to a "commitment between two people" in order to open up to gay and lesbian marriages. I Corinthians 7:2 adds to this discrepancy by saying "... to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Frank Richey has documented how the Presbyterian Church USA has changed from being staunchly against homosexuality before 1978, to saying it is okay in 1991, to then allowing gay preachers in 2010, to finally performing gay wedding ceremonies in 2015. Here is a link my Personal Evangelism outline which includes Frank's quotes:



<http://www.bibledebates.info/PersonalWork/PresbyterianChangesOnHomosexuality.doc>

Question: What would a gay married couple need to do if they wanted to repent of their relationship and be forgiven by God? Isn't it obvious? Then why isn't the same similarly obvious when we are talking about an adulterous marriage per Matthew 19:9? It is the same in principle.

The Old Testament also condemned homosexuality. Notice Leviticus 20:13 - "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death ..." You say "Pat, why is that important?; that's Old Testament law." Here's why it's important. If the Old Testament admittedly demonstrated homosexuality was wrong for the Israelites, then that would prove homosexuals were not born that way. God would never make something a sin that a person could not help, even in Old Testament times.

As a matter of fact Leviticus 18:22-23 ("Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion") in effect puts a man having sex with another man in the same category as a man having sex with an animal. Pointing this out to my gay audiences is the hardest thing I have ever had to do in a public debate. This parallel (even if I explain it in a super sweet way) is always received with mortification and revolt by many gay churches attendees. Try putting yourself in their shoes, and I think you will understand why.

There are other passages in the New Testament which condemn the heinous sin of homosexuality. Jude 3 confirms for us the sin of "Sodom and Gomorrha"

(Genesis 19:1-24) was homosexuality by calling the "fornication" there "going after strange flesh." I Corinthians 6:9-10 condemns both types of gay men (those taking female roles and those taking male roles respectively) by stating "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers. Neither homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God" (NKJV). And I Timothy 1:9-10 condemns the former type by saying "We also know this: The law was not made for a good man, but for people who are lawless, rebels, ungodly, sinners, unholy, not religious, father-killers, mother-killers, murderers, sexual sinners, homosexuals, slave traders, liars, and those who break promises. These and other things are against the healthy teaching as found in the glorious gospel of the blessed God which He trusted to me" (The Simple English NT).

Last question: Can homosexuals stop this sin if they put their mind to it? Of course! Remember from above how I Corinthians 6:9-10 condemned homosexuality? Well, verse 11 says "and such were (past tense) some of you." They had quit being homosexuals in order to become Christians, that is, followers of Christ. Gay marriage is unscriptural. Those who practice homosex need to stop such sexual sin in order to be forgiven and go to heaven (Luke 13:3). Let's keep being plain about this.



# DISCOURSE

**The Scriptures Teach That The Second Coming Of Christ Had Already Occurred In AD 70  
With The Destruction Of Jerusalem And There Will Be No Future Return Of Christ**

**Affirmative: Solomon Baidoo | Central Region, Ghana**

**Denial: Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria**

The above proposition is affirmed by Solomon Baidoo (church of Christ) stating that God's kingdom and Christ's Second Coming occurred in the year 70 AD and that there will be no future Second Coming of Christ. O. Lesley Egharevba (church of Christ) denies the proposition and insisted that God's kingdom came around 33 AD in Acts 2 and that there will be a future literal Second Coming Of Christ.

## Affirmative by Solomon Baidoo

In this piece, my endeavor is to prove that the Second Coming of Christ had already occurred in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and there will be no future return of Christ.

### **The Coming of the Son of Man in Judgment(Matthew 16:27-28)**

*For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Mat 16:27-28)*

From the above text we notice the following:

- (a) He will come to reward each one according to his works
- (b) Time of the coming of the Son of Man in His glory
- (c) Time for the coming of the kingdom
- (d) The audience of fulfillment

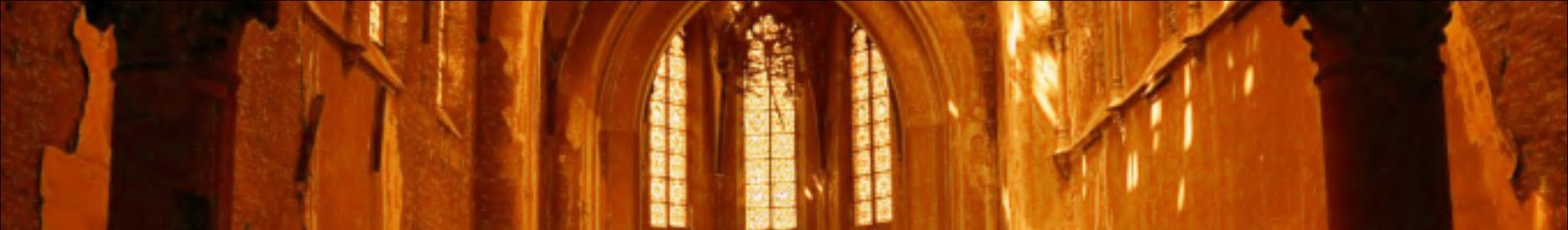
It is very important to note that Christ comes in his kingdom. Two words are translated for “coming” as it relates to Christ. The first is “erchomai,” a verb which means to come. The second word is “Parousia” and means “presence.” It is the common term used in the papyri for the visit of an emperor. It is the word found in Matt. 24:3. (See A.T. Robertson's “Word Pictures In The New Testament”). Luke 17:20-21 helps us to

understand and identify the nature of the coming and presence of Christ.

*Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation nor will they say, See here! or See there! For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.*

It is not a kingdom that comes with ocular visibility. It does not come with observation. It is not a kingdom of this world (Jn 18:36, cf: Heb 9:11-12). Now, that being the case then when Christ returned in His kingdom He did not return in a visible kingdom and thus He did not return visibly. It is therefore important to see the correlation between the invisibility of the kingdom and also the nature of the Parousia or the second coming of Christ. It is not a literal coming, riding on a literal cloud and sitting on a literal throne in terms of being some kind of material entity or coming but rather it is that which is spiritual in nature.

Another important point is that Jesus said there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. This is referent of those people who stood or sat in Christ's audience here on earth when He made this statement.



I have a friend who told me that this is the time of the transfiguration of the Messiah in (Mathew 17), however this cannot be the case because the transfiguration of Christ was the *vision* of the Parousia or the coming of the Lord or else Christ would've returned seven (7) days later and resurrection, judgment and the end of the law would've occurred accordingly but we all know that did not occur. Therefore, to relate the transfiguration of Christ to the coming of Christ in His kingdom does not hold water. Moreover, we know that this is the time of rewarding His servants according to their works and this pertains to the sounding of the last trumpet. Since He would come to reward each one according to his works then this must be the time of the last trumpet. In (Revelation 11:15-19), we have the time of the sounding of the last trumpet, the coming of the kingdom, the resurrection, the Parousia or presence of the Lord, the reign of Christ and judgment which are exact elements of (Mathew 16:27-28). This means that (Revelation 11:15f) is parallel with and fulfillment of (Mathew 16:27-28). Again, this also fulfills (Daniel 7:10):

*A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand ministered to Him ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him the court was seated and the books were opened.*

One of the several names for the feast of trumpets is *Yom HaDin* (Day of Judgment) or the opening of the books or gates. During the feast of trumpets, Israel believed that on every *Yom Hadin*, books are opened and heavenly court is in session and God looked into each one's account to see how they've conducted themselves. This process continued for ten days and closed on Yon Kippur or feast of Tabernacles. So, (Dan 7:10-11) correlates directly with (Revelation

11:15f) because it is the time of rewarding of the servants, the prophets and (Matt.16:27-28) because it involves the rewarding of the servants according to their works all to occur before some who stood in Jesus presence have died.

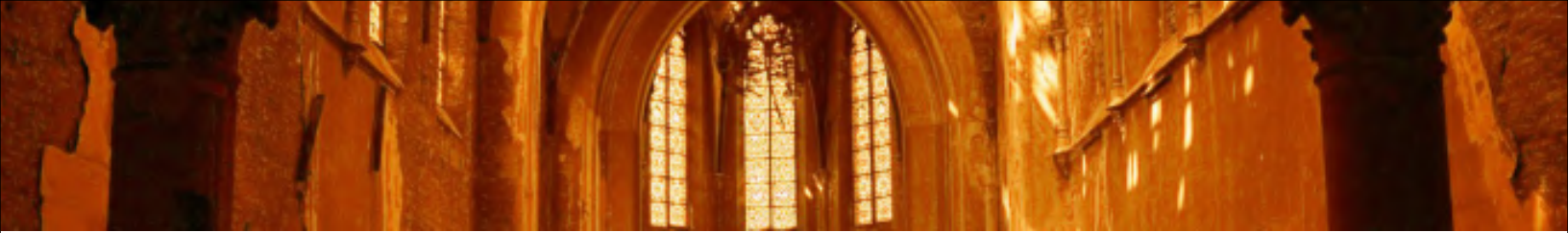
Note also (Luke 13:25-30):

*When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.*

Who could say that other than the people living at the time of Christ? Those with whom He ate with, in whose streets he taught and of whom He said they would be cast out when they see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets sit down in the kingdom of God. That demands a first century occurrence since that equates with the time when the Jews were cast out in the judgment of 70AD (cf: Mathew 8:11-13, 21:33-35, 22:1-13, Rev 12:9, Gal 4:30). Now, you can follow this casting out into the outer darkness, wailing and gnashing of teeth even further into the parable of the tares in (Mat 13:37-43).

*He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world,*





*the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

It says that this will occur at the end of age and the age here is the age of Moses (Mat 12:31-32) because this is the age in which Christ lived when He said those who blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be forgiven neither in this age nor in the age to come. Jesus never lived in the age to come from the perspective of His earthly life, He was born by a woman born under the law and died under the law (Gal 4:3-4). So, this age for them will be the age of Moses and continue till the end of harvest. It did not end before the harvest, He said in (Mat 13:39): the enemy who sowed them is the devil and the harvest is the end of the age. So, Jesus was saying what will happen at the end of the age of Moses. So you see the correlation between (Lk 13, Mat 8) that are in the context of those who ate and drink in Jesus' presence, in whose streets He taught and that's correlated with (Rev 11:15f) which is the time of the sounding of the seventh trumpets which is the last trumpet and the time for the judgment of the dead, the wrath of God, resurrection and the coming of the kingdom and therefore the time for God to reward His servant the prophets and the saints. This will be the time when Christ comes in His kingdom before

those standing there in the first century have all died (Mat 16:27-28.)

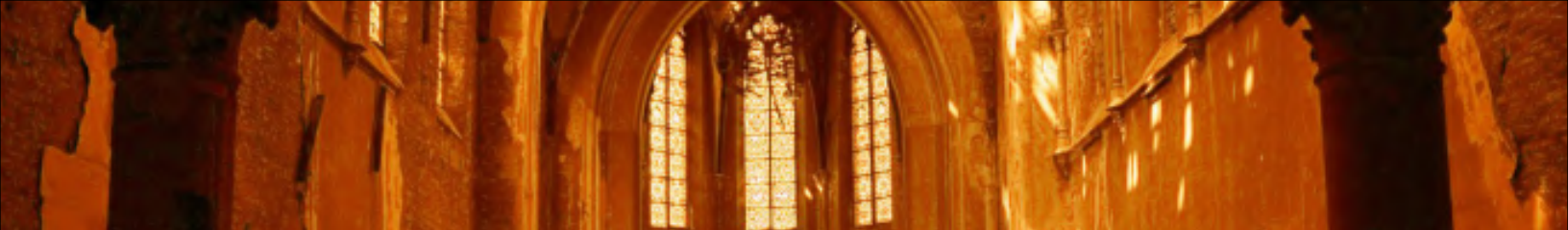
### **The Addendum: Mat 16:27-28 and the Resurrection**

The coming of the Lord in His kingdom is when He comes with His saints from the Hades (Deut 33:2f, Zech 14:5, 1 Th 3:13), in fulfillment of Abraham's eschatological hope (Mat 8:10,11). So, (Mat 16:27-28) is the time of resurrection because the coming of the Lord in His kingdom involves the dead in Hades. Christ is the resurrection (Jn 11:25-26) and the kingdom is the body of Christ (Col 1:18) and thus the kingdom is resurrection. Thus Abraham and the rest were looking for resurrection, that is for Christ and the kingdom (Mat 8:11-12) and this occurred before the first century generation all died, Matthew 24:34. Jesus said the power of hades cannot prevail against kingdom (Mat 16:18f) which is the church (Col 1:18). The time of the coming of Christ coincides with the time of kingdom, judgment and resurrection (2 Tim 4:1). The apostles with the help of the Holy Spirit were building the kingdom in Christ's absentia (1 Pet 2:5, Col 1:23-24) and to perfect the building or complete the building for the presentation and the wedding (Eph 4:11-15, 5:21-28, cf: 2 Cor 11:1-2). The prophets said the kingdom would be established in judgment (Dan 2:34-36, 44-45, Isa 9:7) and Jesus Christ placed the time of the completion of the kingdom in the same judgment context of 70AD (Lk 21:31). Thus, the time of the coming of the Lord with His angels and the dead in Him in His kingdom (Mat 16:27-28) belongs to 70AD.

### **Mat 16:27-28 and the Prophets**

Lastly, Paul said all his writings were from the prophets (Rom 16:23-25) and that what he says in his letters including eschatology (end times), soteriology





(salvation), pneumatology (Holy Spirit)etc, are that which Moses and the Prophets said would come (Acts 26:21-22, 24:13-16) He taught that all prophecies made for Israel found their fulfillment through Jesus Christ (Rom 15:8). Again, scriptures say all Bible prophecies would be fulfilled in connection with the fall of Jerusalem and the temple which occurred in 70AD (Lk 21:20-22).

One of the prophecies made concerning Israel is the coming of the Lord for their salvation in connection with judgment in (Isa 62:11-12):

*Indeed the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the world to the daughter of Zion, surely your salvation is coming behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him and they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord and you shall be called sought out, a City not forsaken.*

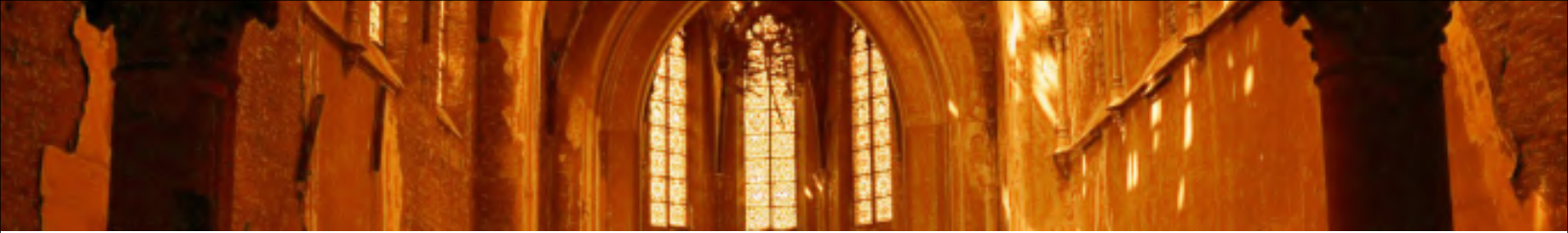
Thus, in the text above, we see the time of the salvation of Israel coupled with the time of judgment or rewarding. At that time the remnants of Israel will be called the Holy People, the redeemed of the Lord (1 Pet 2:9f) and the time of the wedding and the kingdom because the time of the coming of the Lord is when He comes to consummate the marriage.

Again, in (Isa 40:10, 11),

*Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand and His arm shall rule for Him behold, His reward is with Him and His work before Him, He will feed His flock like a shepherd He will gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom and gently lead those who are with young.*

We see the time of the reign of Christ, judgment, and regathering (resurrection) of Israel into the kingdom. Christ is the Shepherd (Heb 13:20, Ezk 37:24) who

will shepherd Israel out of the nations, gather together and restore them to the land (cf: Heb 11:10-16) which is the kingdom. This began on the day of Pentecost where Israel throughout the world gathered together in celebration of the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). This means that Jesus' (Mat 16:27-28) is a quote from (Isa 40:10, 62:11-12). Although salvation belongs to Israel, however that included Gentiles as we see in (Exo 12:38) in the day of the redemption of Israel from Egypt, not only did God save Israel but the multitudes that came out in the exodus with them. Another example is (Rev 7). Not only would God save the remnant 144,000 of Israel but also the multitudes from every tongue, nations, ethnicity etc. Paul, after completing his mission declared he was waiting for the crown of righteousness as his reward on the Day of the Lord but not only him but to ALL (Gentiles and Jews alike) who have loved His appearing (2 Tim 4:7,8, Titus 2:11-13). There's equality for the members of the kingdom through baptism (Gal 3:27-28, 1 Cor 12:12f) and the sameness of the promises for both the Gentiles and the Jews afore time (Eph 3:5,6). Isaiah prophesied about the salvation for Israel alongside Gentiles (Isa 49:1-8, 56:1-8). Israel had commingled themselves with Gentiles (Ho 8:8) after they were given a bill of divorce for idolatry (Jr 3:8). Thus the call of the Gentiles is also the call of Israel in diaspora (Rom 9:23-24) and this was primarily through Paul's Gentile mission (Rom 1:16, 17f, Acts 16:1f), and by so doing God was demonstrating to Israel that they'll be saved by grace just as the Gentiles apart from the law (Acts 15:1-12, 11, Acts 11:18). However, Israel must die to the law first to set themselves free from the law (Rom 6:1f, 7:1-5) as Christ was the lead example in this scheme of redemption through His death which also was His exodus or departure from the dead ones under Judaism to life and righteousness (Lk 9:31,



Rom 6:4,13,14)in fulfillment of (Gal 4:3-4) which is also the time of redemption of Israel.

### **The Axiom**

The point is, the coming of the Messiah for the salvation and judgment belongs to Israel in the first century which was fulfilled in 70AD. Paul, reiterating the promise (which is resurrection: Dan 12:13, Acts 26:6-8)made to the fathers by God that all Israel (the remnant, Dan 12:1) will be saved as foretold by the prophet (Rom 11:26-28)

The Deliverer will come out of Zion (Day of the Lord in judgment) and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins.

The second coming of Christ or the Parousia is to redeem Israel from death to life. This is the meaning of their regathering out from the nations to the land or the kingdom. This is that foretold by Isaiah (Isa 62:11-12, 40:10), thus, the second coming of Christ belongs to Israel in the first century in judgment of 70AD and not beyond.

### **GRACE IS NOT A LICENSE TO SIN**

The gospel is a message of grace. It described our condition of being lost in sin and how Jesus came and died on the cross so that we could be forgiven. Without His sacrifice, we would have no hope of salvation and eternal life with Him.

Yet there were some in the first century – just as there are some today – who took the fundamental teaching of grace and twisted it into something unbiblical. Jude wrote, “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

The New International Version translates the word licentiousness as “a license for immorality.” In other words, Jude warned his brethren about those who would teach that God's grace gives us the permission to sin; therefore, we can live any way we please. This conclusion is completely false.

The grace of God certainly saves us from our sins, but it does not give us permission to continue in sin. The message of the gospel is founded upon the authority of Christ (cf. Matthew 28:18). Yet if we act as though we can disregard what His word teaches us to do and live as we please, we are effectively “[denying] our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” We are saved by grace, but not if we deny the Lord (cf. Matthew 10:33).

So remember that grace is not a license to sin. We are expected to follow the Lord's will in all things. Grace does not permit us to reject the Lordship of Jesus over us.

–Andy Sochor





## The Scriptures Teach That The Second Coming Of Christ Had Already Occurred In AD 70 With The Destruction Of Jerusalem And There Will Be No Future Return Of Christ

### Denial By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

Without mincing words, the above proposition is false, misleading, and dangerous to one's faith. My endeavor in this piece is to deny it. I shall pay careful attention to the arguments presented in the affirmative article and show that the point that Brother Solomon Baidoo tries to prove cannot be justified by the Word of God. I will prove that the Second Coming of Christ has not occurred and did not occur in AD70 and there will be a future literal Second Coming of Christ. I will also show that my dear brother Solomon does not believe what He is trying to prove.

#### Different "Comings" Of The Lord

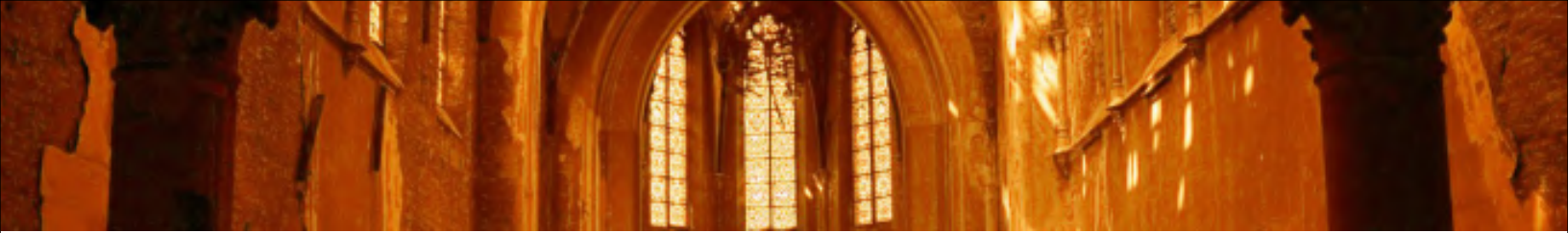
The first mistake of Brother Solomon is that he conflates the coming of the kingdom with the Second Coming of Christ. These are two separate events and he is mistaken to think that both occurred in AD 70. Neither of these occurred in the year AD70 as we shall see. Often times in the Bible, we see different "comings" of the Lord. And depending on the context, it could be figurative or literal. Sometimes it could refer to a visitation of judgment upon a people. For example, in Revelation 2:5 & 16, we find Jesus saying; "*Repent, or else **I will come** to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*" Such providential punitive "comings" were referenced commonly in the writings of the prophets (e.g., Isaiah 26:21; Micah 1:3). However, these indirect "comings" or "visits" by the Lord are distinguished emphatically from the terminal event known as the "second" coming (cf. Hebrews 9:28). In John 1:29, John saw Jesus coming unto him, but this has nothing to do with His second coming.

Hence, it is a serious error for Brother Solomon to think that because Matthew 16:27-28 speaks of Jesus "*coming in His kingdom*," then it must refer to His Second Coming. When you look at the parallel accounts of the same event for additional details (such as Mark 9:1; Luke 9:21-27), one would understand that reference is to the kingdom of Christ that was established on the first Pentecost following Christ's resurrection and ascension in Acts 2. There is no problem with Matthew's statement that the disciples would "*see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*." In his Gospel record, John had quoted the Lord as indicating that by the sending of the Holy Spirit He, indirectly, would be coming (John 14:18). Thus, by "seeing" and "hearing" the effects of the Spirit's empowerment on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:33), the apostles were assured of the Lord's presence. The term "see" is sometimes employed in the sense of spiritual perception, rather than physical vision (cf. John 3:3).

#### Jesus' Second Coming Has Not Occurred

In his writing, Brother Solomon claimed that the Second Coming of Christ had occurred in 70AD. In his words, he said, "*the second coming of Christ belongs to Israel in the first century in judgment of 70AD and not beyond.*" This is false and I am not sure if Brother Solomon truly believes that statement! Why? Because in I Corinthians 11:26, Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said "**For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.**" Paul said that the continuous partaking of the Lord's Supper is to proclaim the Lord's death UNTIL He comes. Now, if Brother Solomon really believes that the Second Coming of the Lord has





occurred, as he now argues, why does he still partake of the Lord's Supper in his congregation? This passage clearly teaches that the observance of the Lord's Supper is to be done until the Lord comes and if the Lord has come, then there should be no need to continuously partake of the Lord's Supper! This is a clear indication that my dear brother, Solomon, does not believe what he advocates. He does not believe Jesus has come the second time! If he does, then he would no longer partake of the Lord's Supper! He is still expecting the Lord to come back again, and that is why he continues to observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday! Will Brother Solomon please explain why he still partakes in the Lord's Supper until this very moment since he teaches that the Lord has come?

### **Jesus' Second Coming Is Literal And Not Figurative**

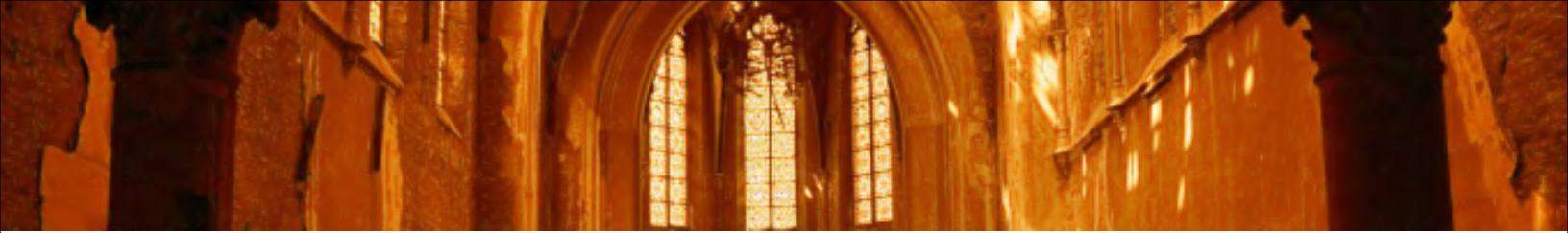
Brother Solomon claimed that the nature of the Second Coming of Christ is not a literal coming. This is false as the Bible clearly indicates that His second coming would be literal. In John 14:1-3 Jesus promised His disciples that He was going to leave them so He might prepare a place for them in His Father's house. Where was He going? To heaven, the dwelling place of His Father (1 Kings 8:30). He then said, "*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.*" The word "again" implies that this coming was to be of the same nature as the first coming. This is not to be a "spiritual" coming as Brother Solomon assumes. There is absolutely no compelling contextual reason for making this coming spiritual in nature.

Also, Paul describes Jesus' future return in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, when he says, "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the*

*voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*" Notice that it says the Lord Himself will descend. This shows it will be personal. Also, in II Thessalonians 1:7-9, Paul affirms, "*and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,*" Furthermore in Acts 1:9-11, Luke records;

*"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'*"

There is nothing in these passages that suggest that Christ's coming will be figurative. Now, if these passages are to be taken figuratively as Brother Solomon and the Preterists would claim, some questions are noteworthy: Did the apostles "figuratively" see Jesus ascend? Would those who were "alive and remain" when Jesus "figuratively" descended "figuratively" meet Him in the air to "figuratively" be with Him forever? How would the destruction of Jerusalem provide comfort for Christians suffering in Thessalonica? Would the "figurative" punishment of their persecutors provide them actual relief or just "figurative" relief? If brother Solomon would submit another article, it is important he answers these questions. The argument that this is figurative language simply does not work



because of the context of these passages. While I would grant that the destruction of Jerusalem could be seen as a figurative “coming” of Christ, i.e., a visitation of judgment upon the Hebrew nation, it is incorrect to teach that these other passages talking about the future coming of the Lord in a literal manner are referring to the events relating to the destruction of Jerusalem.

### What Is “The End Of The Age”?

Another error embedded in the view of Brother Solomon is that he thinks that when the Bible uses the phrase “end of the age” then it refers to 70AD. He cites the parable of the tares in Matthew 13:37-43 where it is stated that The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend. And since this harvest is set to be done “*at the end of the age*”, Brother Solomon thinks the end of the age refers to AD 70. In his words; “*It says that this will occur at the end of age and the age here is the age of Moses.*” This is incorrect. In the context of Matthew 13:37-43, the phrase “*end of the age*” obviously refers to Christ's second coming. It cannot refer to the destruction of Jerusalem since there was no separation of the righteous from the wicked, nor have the wicked been destroyed (II Thessalonians 1:6-9). In the same book of Matthew chapter 28:20, this same phrase and Greek word for “age” are used there, and let us see if it means the end of the age of Moses or the end of the world when Christ returns the second time.

Matthew 28:19-20: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*”

If Jesus promised to be with the disciples always, even

to the destruction of Jerusalem, the two phrases do not match. Forty years is not “always.” Nor would there be great comfort in knowing that Jesus would be with them for only the next forty years. Thus, when the phrase “*end of the age*” is used in Matthew, it points to the same event: **the end of the last age, the Christian age, judgment and the end of the world.**

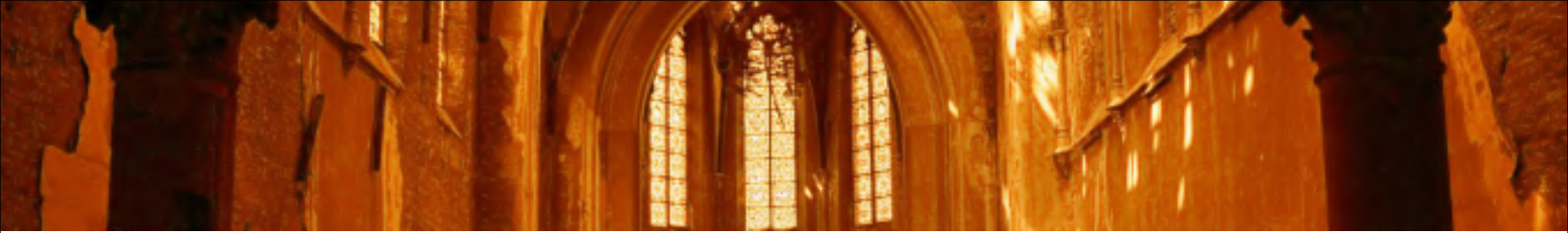
### Did Resurrection Belong In AD 70?

Brother Solomon also made the claim that the resurrection of the dead took place in AD 70. In his words, “*the time of the coming of the Lord with His angels and the dead in Him in His kingdom (Mat 16:27-28) belongs to 70AD.*” Like other Preterists, he denies a personal bodily resurrection of believers. But the truth is: the denial of a personal bodily resurrection of the believer logically results in the denial of Jesus's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12-19). To teach the resurrection of 1 Corinthians 15 as being different in kind than Jesus's resurrection destroys Paul's first fruits analogy (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). If baptized believers were to be made spiritually alive in AD 70, they must have been spiritually dead before AD 70. Was Paul spiritually dead when he wrote the epistle? The truth is, Christians were alive spiritually in Christ before AD 70, not merely in a proleptic sense (cf. Rom. 6:3-6; Eph. 1:3-16; Col. 2:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:17; etc.). The pre-AD 70 church was indeed washed, purified, made alive, enjoying every spiritual blessing in Christ that anyone could enjoy. They were complete in Him (Eph. 1:3-16; Col. 2:9-10).

Besides in John 5:28-29, we read, “*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*”

This indeed does not sound like a resurrection of





Christianity as a system. It sounds like a multiplicity of individuals whose physical bodies were raised from graves. In fact, the phrase “all who” in the Greek is translated literally as “all those” and is a plural masculine term referring to a multiplicity of individuals, not a system. Thus, Jesus was referring to individuals who are to be raised, not Christianity and so, it is false and misleading for Brother Solomon to say that “*the kingdom is resurrection.*”

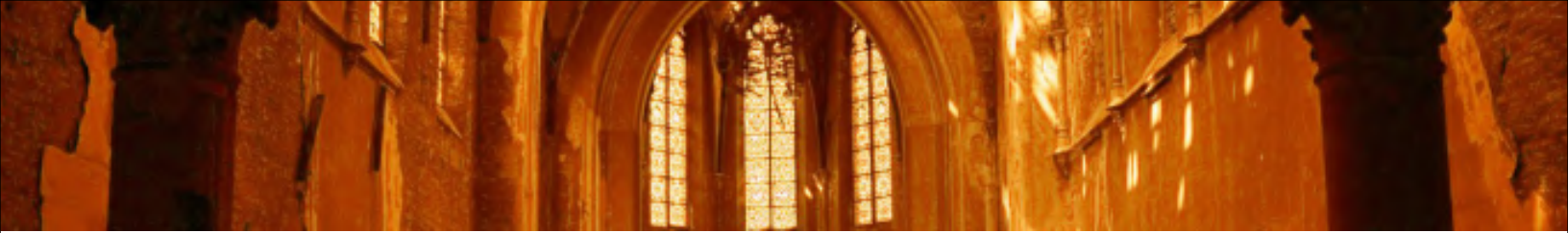
Like other Preterists, Brother Solomon is teaching that what came forth from the graves was the church. The logical consequence is that the church had been dead, that Christianity, as it existed between A.D. 30-70, was dead – a dead religion raised in A.D. 70. That makes no sense but that is what he advocates. He says the church/kingdom established on Pentecost did not come into its full glory, power and completeness until after A.D. 70 because the kingdom was being hindered and suffocated by persecuting Judaism. Thus, it could not be alive until Judaism died. Since Brother Solomon contends that the body (church/kingdom) was the spiritual body resurrected, this means the church was dead or in a state of dying from A.D. 30-70 while Judaism was still alive. The church could not be alive until Judaism died. He might argue that he did not say it that way, but how can there be a resurrection of the dead if there are no dead? And if the kingdom is the resurrection (as Brother Solomon claims), then the kingdom was dead at a time before its resurrection! What an absurd doctrine! Another thing Jesus said about the resurrection of the dead is this: “*in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage*” (Matthew 22:30-31). Yet, today people still marry! How about that?

### **Did The Kingdom Come In AD 70?**

One other error in Brother Solomon's article that I wish to address is concerning the time the kingdom came. There are abundant evidences that prove that the kingdom spoken of in Mark 9:1 actually came on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and this was before AD70. First, notice that Jesus said the kingdom would **come with power**. What this means is that the kingdom would come at the same time that power would come. In other words, the kingdom would come when power comes. If we can find in the scriptures when power came, that would be a clear indication to show to us when the kingdom came. In Acts 1:5-8, we find Jesus telling the apostles to wait for the promise of the Father which would occur not “many days from now.” In verse 8, He said “*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.*” Just ten days later in Acts 2, we saw that power came on the day of Pentecost when they were together in the upper room. And so, we know that the kingdom came on this day since the kingdom was to “come with power.”

Secondly, both the Old and New Testaments teach that Christ was to receive His kingdom after He ascended to the Father (Acts 1:9-11). Even in the same book of Daniel that Brother Solomon referred to, Daniel foretold that “one like unto a son of man” would come “even to the Ancient of Days” [God] and there He would be given “dominion, glory, and a kingdom” (Daniel 7:13-14). Similarly, Christ Himself, in the parable of the pounds, spoke of a certain “nobleman” who journeyed “into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return” (Luke 19:11ff). The “nobleman” was Christ, the “far country” was heaven, and the nobleman's “return” represented the second coming. The “kingdom” was





received by the Lord in heaven—before the second coming, not on earth afterward.

### **Are All Bible Prophecies Fulfilled?**

Brother Solomon said: “*Again, scriptures say all Bible prophecies would be fulfilled in connection with the fall of Jerusalem and the temple which occurred in 70AD (Lk 21:20-22).*” This is untrue because when we examine the scriptures, we learn that Jesus' second coming is to be literal, visible and audible; and this has not yet happened. The Bible does not reveal when Jesus will return, but it has not yet happened, it is still in the future as we have abundantly established. Luke 21:20-22 does not teach that **all Bible prophecies** would be fulfilled in AD 70. At least, we know this because the second coming is yet to take place.

### **Conclusion**

It seems to me that the substance of the arguments presented in Brother Solomon's article has been addressed. There are a couple of other things thrown together in his write-up, some of which I think are irrelevant to the issue, and for some others, it seems unclear what he is trying to prove. If he responds to this writing, we might continue the discussion in subsequent editions of this journal. However, it is important to reiterate in closing that the Scriptures clearly teach that our Lord Jesus Christ will return a second time: “*so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him **He will appear a second time**, apart from sin, for salvation.*” (Hebrews 9:28). The AD 70 Doctrine is a hideous doctrine that will destroy the hope of so many looking for a better life in the hereafter. It is one of the strangest and most bizarre doctrines that has ever been introduced in the churches of Christ. It bewilders me how anyone professing to know the Bible could come up with such ideas. I pray God helps

us all to understand and do His will accordingly. Amen!

### **AN INTERESTING BIT OF HISTORY**

On September 19, 1876, a famous agnostic who gave speeches mocking Christianity, was on a train traveling to a meeting through the Midwestern countryside. Seated next to him on the same train was a man who had been his commander during the Civil War, and also a skeptic of Christianity. The agnostic said, “It won't be long before all the little white churches dotting the countryside will only be a faint memory.” Then he added, “But many people are still enamored of Christianity and this man Jesus. Why don't you write a book exposing Jesus for the fraud that he is?”

The man who made the suggestion was Col. Robert Ingersoll. His companion was Civil War General Lew Wallace. Wallace accepted the challenge, and in a few weeks began to research his book to expose Jesus. To do that he first had to read the Bible. Second, he did some background reading. Third, he went to the Holy Land and searched out places associated with the life of Jesus. Then for the first time in his life he began to talk to people of great faith. Previously, he had only spoken to the university sophisticates of his time.

At the end of his research, he abandoned his skepticism and became a true believer. He wrote the book, “Ben Hur,” not to ridicule Christianity, but to declare Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The book was published on November 12, 1880, and became one of the most influential Christian books of the nineteenth century. It was also made into one of the most popular movies of all time. The anvil of God's Word has worn out many a critic's hammer.

- James Ray

# QUIBBLES THAT BACKFIRED

This section tagged "Quibbles that Backfired" deals with interesting statements and arguments that have been made by people during discussions by way of defense in attempts to justify and sustain their position regarding the subject involved. Some of these quibbles backfired in that the termination of it showed the complete incongruity of the statement made. Others backfired because they reverted upon the person who made them and put him in the very same predicament in which he intended to put the other fellow.

During an exchange concerning whether or not Jesus was created, someone argued from Hebrews 1:5 that since Jesus is called the begotten son of the Father, then that means Jesus was created. He said the word "begotten" means "created" and that would prove Jesus was not in existence until He was begotten. Lesley responded by saying that the same passage states that none of the angels were ever said to be begotten. And if "begotten" means "created," then angels were never created! This conclusion would be contradictory to Psalms 148:5 which clearly teaches angels were created.

Someone argued from Colossians 1:15 that since Jesus is called the "firstborn of every creature," then that proves He was the first to be created. Lesley showed from Jeremiah 31:9 that God called Ephraim His "firstborn" even when he was actually the younger son (Genesis 48:14). Hence, "firstborn of every creature" would not prove that Jesus was created. It refers to first in rank (not time) just like the term "first lady" would imply.

Someone argued on Lesley's YouTube channel that "Before man was made, Jesus did NOT EXIST." Lesley replied that such a statement is very strange because the Bible tells us that Jesus existed and was "in the beginning with God" and that ALL THINGS were made by Jesus (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17). If Jesus did not exist BEFORE man was made, how could Jesus have made ALL THINGS? How can all

things be made by Jesus if He did not exist BEFORE man was created?

Someone argued from Hebrews 1:2 and 2:9 that since Jesus was MADE better and lower (as per 2:9) than the angels, that would prove Jesus was created. He said the Greek word translated "made" means to assemble or create and that would prove Jesus was created. Lesley showed that the word "made" does not always suggest that one was created. For example, if someone made me the director of his company, he didn't create me. I was existing before he made me his director. Whatever God made Jesus to be, that would NOT prove Jesus was created or that He wasn't existing before He was made such.

In a debate with a Oneness Pentecostal on the baptismal formula, the argument is made that the word "name" in Matthew 28:19 is singular and since we are expected to baptize "in the NAME of" and not "in the NAMES of" the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, then there must be only one name. A counter argument was given that Isaiah 9:6 has the singular word "NAME" in there, yet, there is more than one name mentioned. Isaiah 9:6 - "And His NAME shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God..." Having the singular word "name" does not prove there must be only one name.



# Church History

## Early Persecution

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

Though many Christians renounced their faith when faced with persecution, not all of them did. We must be willing to be “faithful until death” (Revelation 2:10), and there were some who remained faithful even in the face of terrible suffering and cruel forms of death.

As the apostles were commissioned to “*make disciples of all the nations*” (Matthew 28:19), this would include preparing these disciples to face persecution for the cause of Christ. Jesus warned about this in His Sermon on the Mount: “*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great...*” (Matthew 5:11-12).

Paul told Timothy, “*Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*” (2 Timothy 3:12). Peter encouraged his readers to “*not be surprised*” when they would inevitably face persecution “*as though some strange thing were happening to [them]*” (1 Peter 4:12). As Jesus was put to death on the cross, those who follow Him must be willing to take up their cross as well (Luke 9:23).

From the beginning of the church, Christians faced persecution. In Jerusalem, the apostles were arrested, beaten, and ordered not to preach anymore about Jesus – an order they rightly ignored (Acts 4:1-3, 18; 5:25-29, 40-42). Stephen was put to death (Acts 7:54-60), initiating a “*great persecution against the church*” which resulted in all but the apostles fleeing Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-3). A little while later, James was put to death and Peter also would have been killed if he had not been miraculously rescued by an angel (Acts 12:1-11). Paul faced angry mobs in many of the places where he preached (Acts 13:50; 14:4-7, 19-20; 17:5, 13-14; 19:41; 21:27-36).

### Principle Persecutors


When we go through the examples recorded in the book of Acts, we mainly read of persecutions against the church that were local and usually provoked by members of the Jewish community who were opposed to the church. However, these persecutions eventually became widespread throughout the Roman Empire. The following emperors were notable in their efforts to persecute Christians:

- **Nero (54-68 AD)** – When the city of Rome burned, Nero deflected suspicion from himself by accusing Christians for being to blame. During his reign, Christians were subjected to torturous treatment, including being sewn up in animal skins to be attacked by dogs and being affixed to trees and used as human torches in his gardens.

- **Domitian (81-96 AD)** – The second great persecution by the Romans occurred during his reign. As the historian Eusebius explained, Domitian “established himself as the successor of Nero, in his hatred and hostility to God (*Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*). Under his rule, hundreds of Christians were put to death.

- **Trajan (98-117 AD)** – Pliny, who was governor of Bithynia, wrote letters to the emperor about the “increasing number of Christians” which was causing “the temples of the heathen gods [to be] almost forsaken. Those who made their living by selling animals to be sacrificed to heathen gods had suffered great loss in business” (*Church History*, John D. Cox,





p. 19-20). Trajan's response allowed for charges to be brought against Christians and, if they were convicted, they would be given the choice to either renounce their faith or be punished.

• **Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD)** – He appealed to a sense of nationalism and nostalgia to justify his opposition to Christians. He endeavored to “restore the ancient religious practices and the old Roman way of life” (*ibid*, p. 20). Since the gospel was advancing the kingdom of Christ, Christians were seen as a threat and were persecuted for it.

• **Diocletian (284-305 AD)** – After a period of relative peace, persecution again became widespread during his reign. In addition to targeting Christians, he also had copies of the Bible seized and burned.

Roman persecution of Christians continued until the time of Constantine who issued the Edict of Toleration in 313 AD. [*We will discuss this further in a future article.*]

### Prominent Martyrs

Though many Christians renounced their faith when faced with persecution, not all of them did. We must be willing to be “*faithful until death*” (Revelation 2:10), and there were some who remained faithful even in the face of terrible suffering and cruel forms of death. Notice a couple of examples:

• **Ignatius of Antioch** – He was killed under the reign of Trajan in 108 AD. While he was on his way to Rome, he wrote to the Christians there “not to use means for his deliverance from martyrdom, lest they should deprive him of that which he most longed and hoped for” (*Fox's Book of Martyrs*). He wrote, “Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the

devil, come upon me; be it so, only may I win Christ Jesus!” (*ibid*). When he finally got to Rome, he was killed by wild beasts in the Roman amphitheater.

• **Polycarp** – He was believed to have been trained by the Apostle John. When given an opportunity to renounce his faith in Christ in order to escape death, he replied, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?” (*ibid*). After saying this, he was burned at the stake.

These are examples of individuals who were fully convinced that the gospel was true, that Jesus was the Son of God, and that a reward for faithfulness awaited them after this life.

### Why Christians Were Persecuted

Jesus called His disciples to be “*peacemakers*” (Matthew 5:9). Paul admonished the Christians in Rome, “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men*” (Romans 12:18). With such an emphasis on being at peace with others, why did the church attract such animosity?

In his book, *Church History*, John D. Cox listed nine reasons for these persecutions. Let us consider a few of these:

• Heathenism welcomed many gods while Christians worshiped only *one* God. When Paul was in Athens, he observed that “*the city [was] full of idols*” (Acts 17:16). When he spoke with the philosophers on Mars Hill, he remarked about “*the objects of [their] worship*” before proceeding to teach them about the “unknown God” (Acts 17:23). The belief in multiple deities was common throughout the empire, yet one of the fundamental beliefs of Christians was that there was just “*one God*” (Ephesians 4:6).

• Idolatry was a way of life for the Romans, yet Christians would not participate in the sacrifices. John closed his first epistle with the warning, “*Little children, guard yourselves from idols*” (1 John 5:21). Paul asked the question, “*Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?*” (2 Corinthians 6:16), in order to make the point that Christians were to “*come out...and be separate*” from the world around them (2 Corinthians 6:17).

• In Roman society, slaves were inferior to free citizens, but Christians saw all people as equals. Paul acknowledged the reality of the master/slave relationship and told slaves to “obey” their masters (Colossians 3:22). At the same time, he told masters to “*grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven*” (Colossians 4:1). However, even with the master/slave relationship in place, the message of the gospel is that “*there is neither slave nor free man...for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28). This equality was a radical view to the world at that time.

• Some saw their businesses threatened by the spread of Christianity, particularly those businesses whose profit was directly connected to idol worship. This was the reason why Demetrius instigated the persecution against “*the Way*” in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-24). Since Paul was teaching that “*gods made with hands are no gods at all,*” there was “*danger that this trade [would] fall into disrepute*” (Acts 19:26-27). As we already noticed, this also contributed to the persecution that occurred under Trajan. When a group of people believe their livelihood is threatened, they will often lash out at whatever or whoever they perceive to be the threat.

It is interesting to consider the similarities between

the world that opposed the early church and the world today. As the wise man noted, “*There is nothing new under the sun*” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). As the early Christians often had to face severe persecution, we must be prepared to endure the same today without abandoning our faith.

### Summary

Jesus told His apostles, “*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you*” (John 15:18-19). He has called all of us to be different from the world – not “*conformed,*” but “*transformed*” (Romans 12:2). Being faithful to this calling is often what will make us a target. This has been happening to Christians since the beginning. Let us not turn away from the Lord when we face persecution; instead, let us show the same courage as men like Ignatius, Polycarp, and even the apostle Paul who “*fought the good fight... finished the course... [and] kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:7).



**Lew Wallace – A skeptic of Christianity who later became a believer in Christ after his research about the Bible and the Christian faith**

# BARBS WITH A POINT

**"Thou Shall Not Get Drunk, But Thou Shall Drink In Moderation"**

**By Rowland Femi Gbamis | Ontario, Canada**

Text: "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"; "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." (Hebrews 5:14; Phil.1:9-10-NKJV)

## **Introduction**

The caption: "*Thou Shall Not Get Drunk, But Thou Shall Drink In Moderation*" was echoed by a friend-professor while deliberating on the moral laxity of Paul Pelosi's behaviour while pleading guilty to drunken driving in California on August 23, 2022, following his arrest on May 28 crash in Napa County, north of San Francisco, after a Driving Under Influence (DUI) test showed he had a blood alcohol content of .082%, just over the legal limit. ([Steve Gorman, 2022](#)). My friend believes Mr. Pelosi should have respected himself enough by drinking moderately, which would have saved him all the embarrassment. On the contrary, during our discussion, I hold that he ought to have abstained from alcohol as that alone would have saved him all the disgrace he brought upon himself and the revered position his wife is holding in the American political space. In his judgment, the professor believes that I am a reasonable person; hence I should understand it is nowhere written in the Bible categorically: "thou shall not drink". As I tried to get him to reason his argument, he retorted, "oh, Rowland, common! The logical conclusion should tell you that what God wants is drinking in moderation." Interesting discussion, right? It is not surprising at all! I have heard gospel preachers and elders in the Lord's church advance the same arguments. Distinctly, in the remaining part of this write-up, I will argue that for children of God to be filled with the Spirit of God,

they must make every effort to abstain from every form of alcoholic beverage.

## **What is Alcohol?**

Alcohol is a narcotic drug, even though some do not consider it so because of its legality, but it is. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, alcohol is a liquor drink such as wine, beer, or distilled spirits, encompassing ethyl alcohol or ethanol ( $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ ) as an inebriation agent. Alcohol produces a state of stupor. Note, however, that the word stupor and stupid originated from the same root word. In other words, alcohol is stupidity in a bottle, and the effects of alcohol on the brain begin with the first drink because it directly affects the brain and impairs the brain's ability to coordinate appropriately with the body's motor functions. Alcohol is a Central Nervous System Depressant (CNSD) that slows down the brain's function and speed. It blurs the critical faculty of discernment in the brain and causes memory lapses.

## **Practical Application**

While there are several ways to quench the Spirit in the Scripture, one sure way to do that quickly is drinking alcohol. Unsurprisingly, the Holy Spirit says we should abstain from every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). To "abstain" is to refrain, withdraw, and cease doing something; in this sense, cease/renounce drinking alcoholic beverages. From ancient times, people have been drinking alcoholic beverages





ranging from wine to beer and brewed drinks like *burukutu*, an alcoholic beverage brewed from the grains of Guinea corn and millet. In Genesis, we read an account of a man of God who got drunk and became naked in his shelter due to inebriation (9:20). While Noah lay naked in his shamefulness, his son, Ham, derided him, and upon discovery by Noah, he caused his son (vs 21). Evil begets evil. Noah's sense of right and wrong became dull through the evil allurements of fermented wine. We all know the end of the story, the lineage of Ham-Canaanites eventually became a sworn enemy to the children of the Israelites—all credit to Noah, the man of God's undiscerning attitude toward wine (vs 25). Dear readers, let us pause and reflect on the impact of our influence on many generations to come. As preachers and elders, may God forbid we stand shamefully on the pulpit to encourage alcoholic drinkers, preaching that what God teaches is moderation.

In another breath, we read of another righteous man, Lot, who got trapped by his two daughters and was subjected to the evil influence of alcohol. While many have condemned that he laid with his daughters, I am more concerned that if Lot had refused the first drink, he would have circumvented the evil scheme by his daughters (Gen.19:30-35). Unfortunately, Lot had carnal knowledge of his daughters while sleeping without knowing because he found himself at the lowest point of his senses due to the evil influence of the alcohol. Consequently, the two products that resulted from the reprehensible behaviour were Moab and Ben-Ammi, two strong enemies to the children of Israelites (vs 36-38). How sad, right? Unsurprisingly, one of the many problems in the Lord's church today results from alcoholic drinks. Problem upon problem! Children are born out of wedlock because someone went to a drinking party and engaged in

fornication resulting in a "marriage of convenience" to avoid shame. At home, the economic impact of alcohol on family finance is disastrous; in society, the rate of car accidents and crashes leading to bodily harm and deaths saddened the heart. Also, consider how alcohol negatively impacts our health, including diabetes, kidney problems, cardiovascular diseases, and liver cirrhosis. Alcoholic beverages occasioned many crimes in society.

The question is, why would a child of God be found romancing such intoxicant and defending such? Sometimes, the alcoholic drinkers know too much about Solomon's sermon on drunkenness but forget his admonition that says: **Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging: whosoever is deceived by it is not wise** (Prov. 20:1). Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. **Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things.** (23:29-33).

Let us pause and reflect; why would it be difficult for any sincere person to understand the simple instructions and godly guidance in the above passage? Wine is a mocker. Was Noah not mocked and felt ashamed after he woke up from his drink? How about Lot? His daughters made a caricature of him by weakening his sense of right and wrong through alcoholic drinks. How is that difficult to understand for my dear wine drinkers? The wise man says, "whoever is led astray by wine is not wise." In other words, you are a fool if you submit to the evil allurements of alcoholic wine to dull your sense of



reasoning. However, there is hope. The Preacher proffers a solution which should suffice: Do not look at the wine when it is red and when it sparkles in the cup. To fail to heed the warning is to stray in the destruction path. Those who dissipate their energy to justify their drinking habits by running from Genesis to Revelation to seek defense should ponder the following Bible passages and their usages.

| S/N | Positive<br>(Unfermented Wine) | Negative<br>(Fermented Wine) |
|-----|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1.  | Genesis 14:18                  | Genesis 9:20, 21             |
| 2.  | Gen. 40:11                     | Genesis 19:30-35             |
| 3.  | Amos 9:14                      | Leviticus 10:8-10            |
| 4.  | Zechariah 10:7                 | Proverbs 20:1; 4:17          |
| 5.  | Isaiah 65:8                    | Proverbs 23:29-35            |
| 6.  | Num.18:12-13                   | Proverbs 31:4,5              |
| 7.  | Gen. 27:28                     | Daniel 1:8                   |
| 8.  | Deut. 7:13                     | Isaiah 5:22; 56:12           |
| 9.  | Prov. 3:10                     | Isaiah 28:7, 8               |
| 10. | Matt. 26:26-28                 | Habakkuk 2:5,15              |
| 11. | John 2:1-10                    | 1 Corinthians 5:11           |
| 12. | Deut. 11:14                    | Eph. 5:18                    |


From the above tabulation, there are two senses in the usage of the passages. The first column depicts Bible passages describing wine from the grapes' juice that contains no alcohol. In this sense, wine is being spoken of as a blessing and commended. It is associated with altar offerings, sustaining power, emblem of spiritual blessings, emblem of Christ's blood, and things which strengthen the body and rejoice the heart. Contrastingly, the second column deals with Bible passages that condemned the sinful practices of drinking wine. They are associated with intoxication, drunkenness, violence, woe, a false sense of security, profane religion, and poison. Hence, it

should not be difficult to understand that the context determines whether a wine is fermented, which could lead to intoxication or unfermented wine with no alcoholic content.

Robert Young made an excellent observation on Ephesians 5:18 concerning alcoholic drinkers who argued that drinking is all right, provided one is not drunk. Ephesians 5:18 reads, "*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.*" Young observes that the verb "Do not be drunk" (methusko-3182) *implies*, "Do not start (begin) to be softened" with wine. W.E. Vine describes this verb as: "to make drunk, an inceptive verb that begins the process of the state expressed in methuo (3184), 'to drink to intoxication.'" Literally, Paul says, "Do not even begin the process of becoming drunk or softened by alcohol." Conclusively, it makes scriptural sense to abstain from initiating the process of drinking alcoholic beverages. For example, consider the account of Luke 12:45 "But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk" – observe the progression? That is the only way Christians can remain alert and awake as children of God "filled with the Spirit."

### Reflection On 1 Peter 4:3

We read in 1 Peter 4:2-3: "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." Peter uses three phrases concerning drinking liquor: excess of wine, revellings and banquetings. Thus, after careful study of our text, I do not think the Holy Spirit



deliberately uses words carelessly in delineating the phrases concerning liquor drinking. **Excess of wine** (Gk. οἰνοφλυγίαις, oinophlygiais: wine-drinking, drunkenness) describes those who have drunk so much that they are throwing up. The truth is, everyone knows the description above is wrong and is quick to condemn such behaviour. However, there is a fellow that is guilty of **revelling** (Gk. κώμοις, kōmois, revels, orgies). He is the fellow that is half-looped, usually loud and boisterous. Lastly, there is a fellow described as **banquetings** (Gk. πότοις, potois, drinking, carousing). The English Standard Version (ESV) translates it as "drinking parties." For example, some believe there is nothing wrong with "social drinking" or "drinking a few". Hence, they see nothing wrong with serving assorted beers in ceremonies such as naming, marriage parties, or housewarming, nor do they see anything inappropriate with entertaining guests with alcoholic drinks in their homes and offices. Remarkably, in all three categories of alcoholic drinking, Apostle Peter says it is part of doing the will of the Gentiles. As children of God, we should want no part of the sinful lifestyles enumerated in our text. Our desire should be to spend our time doing God's will.

### Conclusion

Given the above scriptural facts, I believe many, including my revered professor and friend, would agree that the Bible recognizes the difference between different drinking levels. Moreover, God condemns all three categorizations of drinking as part of the old life of sin! Christians should seek to "*make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*" (Rom.13:14). It certainly takes great caution to avoid the greater or lesser state of effect from intoxicating drink. Those who genuinely love Christ realize he

died in the flesh to destroy sin's rule over us. Christ's love should cause us to cease sin (1Peter 4:1). Let me also appeal to as many who are reading this today to open your hearts by accepting the word of the Lord that says, "*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.*" (Rom. 13:12-13). Suppose you are one of those who have wasted enough of your life serving the flesh. In that case, you must devote the remainder of your life to doing the Lord's will in faithful obedience to his word. The Bible says faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31); believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24; John 3:18; Acts 8:36-38); repent of sins (Luke 13:5; Acts 17:30; Romans 3:23; 6:23); be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21); and, faithfully continue to trust and walk with God (Matt. 24:13; Heb. 10:36-39; Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). As a child of God struggling with the evil influence of alcohol in your life, let us learn a lesson from King Lemuel's mother to his son, "*It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes, strong drink: Lest they drink, forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.*" (Prov.31:4-5). As God's children, we should realize that one of the things that destroy kings is alcoholic drinks. See the progression? Is it not true that we are priests in the kingdom of Christ (cf. Rev.1:6)? Let our lives reflect the glory of God in all ramifications, illuminating this world of darkness. May God help us.

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# INSTITUTIONALISM

## Institutionalism

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

The church in the New Testament did not use the aid or agency of a human organization to carry out its work. We see local churches doing these works among the brethren in their location (Acts 4:32-35; 5:28). When they engaged in the preaching of the gospel in other locations, they did so by supporting preachers directly (Philippians 4:15-16).

As we look at the work God has given to the church, we find a great amount of work to do. Jesus told His disciples, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*” (Matthew 9:37). This means that there is plenty for all of us to be doing. Each local congregation has much work to do. There will never come a time as long as the earth stands when the Lord's church has done all the work it can do.

Some look at the overwhelming amount of work to be done and try to devise a better way to do the works of evangelism, edification, and benevolence. One method men have created is what has been referred to as *institutionalism*. That is, they form organizations separate from the church to do the work of the church. However, when we read the New Testament, we find no organization other than the church that God has approved to do these works. This is not to say that we, as individuals, cannot perform these works. Individuals can spread the gospel (Acts 8:4), edify other Christians (Hebrews 3:13), and help those in need (Galatians 6:10). In fact, we are to do these things. But the only organization or collective we find in Scripture authorized to do these works is the church. We simply find no authority for Christians to form human organizations to do the work God gave the church to do.

As controversy has arisen in the past on the issue of institutionalism, the primary point of debate had to do with churches funding these organizations from their treasury. As we already noted, we read of no

organization other than the church in the New Testament to do the works of the church. One of the basic rules of hermeneutics is that when God has specified something, everything else is excluded. This principle was applied by the Hebrew writer to make the point that Jesus could not have been a priest under the Old Law. Why? “*For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests*” (Hebrews 7:14). Since God specified that priests were to come from the tribe of Levi, all other tribes were excluded from this role. Likewise, God has specified the church as the organization to do the works of evangelism, edification, and benevolence. Since God has specified the church, all other organizations are excluded and, therefore, are unauthorized.

However, it seems as though that point has been largely ignored in the institutional controversy. The primary argument used against institutionalism had to do with churches funding the institutions from their treasuries. Because of this, it appears that some in the church see this as the *only* thing wrong with the concept of institutionalism. They reason then that an institution is all right as long as it does not receive funds from churches. Yet the *primary* problem with the concept of institutionalism is that it forms an organization to do the works of evangelism, edification, and benevolence when God has specified the *church* as the organization to do these works.

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# MYTH BUSTER

## Does the Bible Promise Prosperity to Believers?

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

The New Testament promises that in this life, Christians will experience tribulation (Acts 14:22), suffering (Rom. 8:17), and even persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). But nowhere does God promise to make Christians materially prosperous. Any teaching that claims that believers are promised prosperity in this life is a satanic deception.

### Introduction

The prosperity gospel states that God's plan is always for us to be wealthy and that if one has enough "faith", then they will experience great material blessings. If God intended for believers to be prosperous, why do we read of so much affliction, persecution, scorn, and trials experienced by the apostles and early believers?

### Old Testament prosperity

Some Old Testament passages link material prosperity with God's blessing. For instance, God gave material wealth to Abraham (Gen. 13:1-7), Isaac (Gen. 26:12-14), Jacob (Gen. 39:2-6), etc. He also promised the Israelites that He would reward them materially for faithful giving (Deut. 15:10, Prov. 3:9-10, 11:25, Mal. 3:8-12). Are the Old Testament promises of prosperity applicable to Christians? To get an answer to this question, let us point out some differences between the Old Testament and New Testament views on prosperity.

In the Old Testament, material blessings were given for obedience (Deut. 28:2), but in the New Testament, several of the saints were poor (Matt. 8:20, 2 Cor. 11:27, James 2:5). And the same is true for believers today, especially in countries with poor economic situations.

In the Old Testament, emphasis was laid on enjoying worldly wealth (Deut. 28:11, Josh. 1:15, Prov. 15:6), but the New Testament lays emphasis on giving away possessions (Mark 10:17-21, 1 Tim. 6:17-18).


By their obedience, the Israelites avoided persecution (Deut 28:7), but by their obedience Christians incur persecution (Matt. 5:11-12, 2 Tim. 3:12, 1 Pet. 1:6).

It is easy to understand the reason for the disparity in these two dispensations when we read the declaration of Hebrews 8:6 which says that the New Covenant is "founded on better promises" than the Old. God determined that the beneficiaries of the New Covenant will understand that their home is not of this world. The steady fulfillment of God's promise of material blessings under the Old Covenant should only inspire us to have confidence in God to fulfill the promises of our future heavenly blessings. The New Covenant does not bring about temporal inheritance promised to Israel, but an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

God demonstrated to the nations surrounding Israel His superiority over their gods by prospering the children of Israel when they obeyed Him. He now wishes to display Christ's presence to the world around us through better faith and morality, not a higher standard of living.

### Contentment

1 Timothy 6:6-11 gives us a warning about pursuing or expecting prosperity and lays emphasis on contentment. *"Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into this world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be*



***content.** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”* Jesus says in Luke 12:15, “*take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, **for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.***”

Rather than teaching us to pursue prosperity, the bible teaches us to be content and to find fulfillment in God through Jesus Christ, Paul speaks of his hardship in the book of Philippians, and in Phil. 4:11-12, he writes “Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need”. Contentment is finding fulfillment in our earthly lot and ultimately finding joy in Him alone. If we are content, then we are truly prosperous.

### **Spiritual blessing**

The inheritance promised to a believer is spiritual, future, and eternal; God promises treasures in heaven (Luke 18:22). And yet, with all the blessings spoken of in the scripture, God's pleasure and favor upon the Christian does not necessarily mean that He will make each faithful person rich. Some experience financial poverty because of their faithfulness to God, like Jeremiah, Paul, Jesus, and many other believers. Poverty and wealth happen to all kinds of people and Jesus teaches that God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). But spiritual blessings only come upon those who are faithful to God.

Jesus says, “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matt. 6:19-21).

Our greatest resources are spiritual, not material. Even in the worst of circumstances, it is possible to experience a fulfilling life as that is what set Christians apart. Poor believers who are living in oppressive circumstances can be far more joyful and satisfied than unbelievers who are living in luxury and plenty.

### **Conclusion**

The New Testament promises that in this life Christians will experience tribulation (Acts 14:22), suffering (Rom. 8:17), and even persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). But nowhere does God promise to make Christians materially prosperous. Any teaching that claims that believers are promised prosperity in this life is a satanic deception.

When God raises us from the dead, Christians will be given glorified bodies and will dwell in perfect fellowship with God. At that time God will “*wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away*” (Rev. 21:4). However, Christians are called to endure “*slight, momentary affliction*” that is “*preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison*” (2 Cor. 4:17). We are called to “**count it all joy**” whenever we face various trials (James 1:2). We can endure the trials and sufferings of this life because we know that if we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:18).





# IDEAL HOME

## Why Parents Should Dress Their Young Children Modestly

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

Christians are “not [to] be conformed to this world, but be transformed” (Romans 12:2). In every area of our lives – including how we dress – we must strive to follow the instructions found in the word of God.

There are many ways in which Christians show themselves to be different from the world. One of these is in the way we dress. The Bible emphasizes the importance of dressing in “*modest apparel*” (1 Timothy 2:9, KJV). Therefore, as we have the obligation to “*speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11, KJV), it is important for us to emphasize this as well.

However, when it comes to raising children, we may wonder how early parents need to be concerned with having their children dress modestly. When does it become important for parents to be sure their children are dressed in this way? When they turn eighteen? When they become teenagers? Or should this begin much earlier, perhaps when the children are toddlers? The time to start this may be earlier than many expect.

In this article, I want us to consider some reasons why dressing modestly is important for *young* children.

### To Train Them

The wise man wrote, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6). The reason why parents train their children is to prepare them for adulthood. This is not merely about preparing them to be a productive member of society (even though this is important). Children are to be brought up “*in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). In other words, children are to be trained to become faithful followers of the Lord.

One of the ways in which we display a proper attitude toward the Lord and follow His instructions is in the way that we dress. The Scriptures instruct us to dress in modest apparel. This means that part of training up a child in the way he/she should go involves teaching the child about modesty. Of course, modesty is not limited to clothing; but it certainly includes it. Some assume that this type of training becomes important when children become older (perhaps around their teenage years). However, the training that parents do is so that their children do not depart from it when they *become* older. This implies that training about dressing modestly must be done when the children are younger – *before* they are making their own decisions about the type of clothing they will wear.

### To Prevent Lust

This is probably not a point that most parents consider, especially when it comes to young children. It is not something that should even need to be mentioned. However, given the perverse and wicked world in which we live and the fact that children's clothing fashions – particularly for girls – often mimic the provocative styles of those who are older, this does become something we need to take into consideration.

Of course, if someone has a mind that is so perverse as to lust after a child, what that child is wearing may be mostly irrelevant. It is also true that each person is responsible to keep from lusting after others (Matthew 5:28-29), regardless of how others might



be dressed. However, we should also be aware of the effect clothing can have on others. We are to dress “*modestly and discreetly*” (1 Timothy 2:9). This means that if someone is inclined to lust, our clothing should not draw that person's attention. When parts of our bodies are exposed, it is a signal to those around us that we are welcoming – or at least tolerating – the attention paid by others to those parts that are uncovered. And as much as we think this reasoning should not apply to our children because our minds cannot comprehend how anyone can have those kinds of thoughts about a child, it is something that ought to be considered.

### To Be Different from the World

Christians are “*not [to] be conformed to this world, but be transformed*” (Romans 12:2). In every area of our lives – including how we dress – we must strive to follow the instructions found in the word of God.

The reason why many parents tend to allow their children to dress immodestly is because they are simply buying the current fashions. However, this goes back to the point we considered about training our children. What message are we teaching them when our clothing standards are based upon current fashion more than the word of God? When fashion changes – likely for the worse – how are they going to want to continue to dress? Children need to see that it sometimes takes some effort, time, or expense to conform to God's standard and be different from the world. They need to see that this is part of our “*reasonable service*” to God (Romans 12:1, KJV), not something that is too much of a burden. If children do not learn to be different from the world, then they will follow the morals and standards of the world.

### Conclusion

The Scriptures do not provide a specific age in which parents are to be sure they are dressing their children modestly. However, from the principles considered here, we should recognize that this is not something for parents to ignore. Children need to be trained, protected, and taught the importance of conforming to God's standard rather than the world's. In every area – not just in dress – this needs to start at an early age.

**“Thou Shall Not Get Drunk,  
But Thou Shall Drink In Moderation”**

**Continued from pg. 29**

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# SALVATION

## A Model Of Good Deeds

By Rowland Femi Gbamis | Ontario, Canada

Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things, I desire that thou affirm confidently, to the end, that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men (Titus 3:8-ASV).

I have heard the story of a little girl in a Sunday school who, after hearing a description of the manner of Jesus, stood and said that Jesus lived on her street. Further enquiry revealed that a godly man who lived on the same street with this girl exhibited the kindness of Jesus Christ in his lifestyle that the girl insisted he was Jesus. After Jesus Christ's ascension (Acts 1:9-11), the disciples' manner of life, mode of speech, and actions bore testimony to the saving grace of the Lord. Hence, the disciples of Christ were called Christians because of their "Christlike" nature (Acts 11:26). Indeed, they were models of good deeds. The question is, are you a model of good deeds? Our way of living speaks more than multitudes of our words (cf. Luke 6:43-45). Words without exemplary examples are dead and empty (1 Tim. 4:12; Phil. 3:17). Our life should testify to the truth of the words we speak (Titus 2:7). No matter how sound the doctrine preached, it is pointless if it does not reveal the life of Christ in the preacher or the speaker (1 Tim. 4:16). Many people who start with good works do not persist in them because it is against human nature to continuously do good. Jesus declared that no one is good except God (Luke 18:19). It behooves us to realize that without absolute trust and dependence upon the Lord, we can do no good.

There are several reasons why people do not persist in good works. At times, the good we do goes unnoticed and thus unappreciated. In many cases, we are paid back with evil for good. It is only human to get discouraged when the good we do, no matter how

much it seems, goes unappreciated. The Lord calls upon us today to persist in doing good even when we are recompensed with evil (Gal. 6:9-10). The little good we do will go a long way to lighten up the darkness in this world of cruelty and evil (cf. Matt. 5:43-48; Rom.12:20-21). The Lord is the faithful rewarder of His people (Heb.11:6). Is your love for God and the brethren growing every day? Let us note that "It is God who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil.2:13). Let us think about these things, and may God help us to abide in his words. Amen.

## INSTITUTIONALISM

**Continued from pg. 30**

The church in the New Testament did not use the aid or agency of a human organization to carry out its work. We see local churches doing these works among the brethren in their location (Acts 4:32-35; 5:28). When they engaged in the preaching of the gospel in other locations, they did so by supporting preachers directly (Philippians 4:15-16). When they sent aid to needy brethren, they sent it to the elders of the congregation(s) where the need existed (Acts 11:29-30). We find no organization being used by the church to carry out these works. We also see the local church as the only organized collective through which Christians worked to perform these spiritual works.



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## Should we pray to cover ourselves with the blood of Jesus?

By Jeffery Hamilton | Nebraska, USA

### Question:

Is it OK, while we pray, to cover ourselves with the blood of Jesus? For example, we cover ourselves with the blood of Jesus for protection. Do you remember the Passover when a lamb's blood was used for protection against death? In that same way, better blood that speaks more than that of a lamb can be used as a means of protection when we declare and believe it with faith, isn't it?

### Answer:

It is interesting how people take phrases from the Bible and combine them to create something that the Bible never teaches. I can find no passage that talks about the blood of Jesus covering anything. There are numerous passages that speak of Christ's blood *cleansing* us, but that is a different concept.

*"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:6-9).*

*"For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).*

*"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Romans 5:9).*

*"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the*

*forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).*

*"For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13-14).*

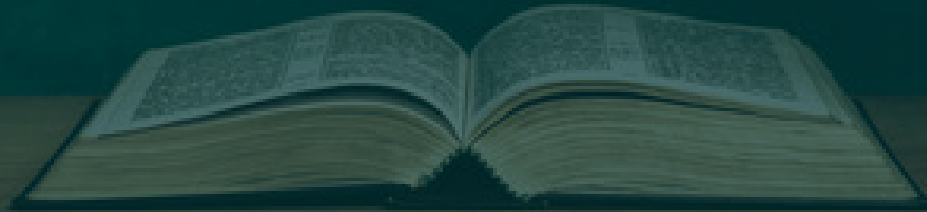
*"Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).*

*"To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood" (Revelation 1:5).*

*"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).*

The concept of Jesus being the Passover Lamb is true, but again it applies to the removal of sin. "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" " (John 1:29). The blood on the doorposts was to have the death angel pass over the home, so you can say the occupants were protected from death. But the consequence of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and so Jesus' blood can also protect us from spiritual death. However, this is not general protection.

But Jesus' blood also purchased the saved. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy



*Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" ([Acts 20:28](#)). It brought Jews and Gentiles together in the church. "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" ([Ephesians 2:13](#); also [Colossians 1:20](#)).*

Nowhere do you find imagery telling people to pray to have Jesus' blood cover them. Jesus' blood was already shed and it is up to people to decide whether to submit to Christ's will to accept the salvation he was offering. Actually, to say you are covered in blood is to say you are guilty of murder.

*"So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood" ([Isaiah 1:15](#)).*

*"For your hands are defiled with blood And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness" ([Isaiah 59:3](#)).*

*"When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"' ([Matthew 27:24-25](#)).*

## LET YOUR PROGRESS BE EVIDENT TO ALL

It is not uncommon for those who are older to look down upon those who are younger (sometimes for good reason, other times not). Yet when Paul wrote to Timothy, a younger preacher, he told him, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness? (1 Timothy 4:12).

Of course, Timothy could not control people's thoughts, so how could he influence what they thought of him? Paul continued: "But rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:12). Timothy was not "entitled" to respect; rather, he was to show by his actions that he was someone to be respected and emulated.

Paul explained that Timothy was to do this by focusing on reading and teaching God's word, making use of his spiritual gift, and being fully committed to his work (1 Timothy 4:13-15). This would inevitably lead to his own spiritual growth and, as Paul said, his "progress [would] be evident to all" (1 Timothy 4:15).

We may think it is unfair that others (especially those who are older) treat us as inexperienced, irresponsible, and immature, and sometimes this does happen unfairly. The solution is for us to gain experience, act responsibly, and develop maturity.

So let your progress be evident to all. Regardless of how others perceive you, make sure you are doing what the Lord expects you to do. If others still look down on you despite this, it will eventually be evident who truly is the one who is immature.

-- Andy Sochor

# ADDENDUM

## A Crisis In Christianity

By Fanning Yater Tant – THE BIBLE BANNER, 1938

Unless the Wave of Doctrinal Inertia and Relaxation Is Checked We Are in Danger of Degenerating Rapidly Into "Just Another Denomination."

As the stone thrown into the lake will cause waves to reach even the farthest shore, so any idea, attitude, or experience on the part of any of us will to some degree affect all of us. No one is immune to the thoughts and beliefs of his associates. He will undoubtedly feel their influence even if he does not yield to their sway. We have seen with what incredible rapidity political doctrines spread from one nation to another. Two decades ago, there were a score of kings reigning in Europe who are now either dead or in exile. The unrest and dissatisfaction of all the world after the World War proved fertile soil for the growth of political propaganda. Breaking out at first only as a tiny flame, the gospel of revolt swept like a holocaust across the face of the earth.

In one country after another the red flag of revolution was unfurled to the breeze; dynasties which had lasted for a thousand years were put to the sword; bloodshed and violence were the order of the day. No nation was absolutely immune to the epidemic. In some countries, as in America, other and more strongly entrenched ideals counteracted its influence, but every nation on earth felt its pull.

### A New Development in Religion

While these changes have been going on in the political realm there has been an equally profound and significant development in the world of religion. No man at all conversant with the trend of modern thought can fail to recognize it. Dating from the time when the misinterpreted speculations of scientists precipitated a terrific fight between orthodox religion and the evolutionary hypothesis, and reaching its


climax after the World War, there has developed an appalling apathy in the doctrinal teaching and doctrinal loyalty of every denomination. Until today in practically every denomination the mass of the membership is wholly ignorant of, and totally unconcerned about, the doctrinal tenets around which their church was built, a condition which did not exist a half-century ago.

Side by side with this doctrinal paralysis, indeed, dependent on it, has grown up a strong desire and sentiment toward union. After the rock-like dogmas and convictions of a previous generation had been broken down, the agitation for union swelled into a mighty chorus. And it is beginning to yield fruit. The Methodist Episcopal Church seems certainly headed toward a healing of the division which is now nearly a hundred years old; the Presbyterians are discussing union more strongly than ever before; the Christian Connection and Congregational Churches have already achieved it. And in scores of communities there have sprung up community churches, interdenominational movements, federations of churches and such like. These things could never have been as long as people were honestly divided by convictions, but since there are no longer convictions to divide, church union is not only possible but to be expected.

### Effects on the Church of Christ

Inasmuch as the church is composed of human beings who think and feel and act like other human beings, and since we are not immune to the subtle influence of world reactions and world attitudes, it was inevitable





that sooner or later the backwash of these two modern religious trends be discernible within the body of Christ. Indeed, the ideal of church unity has ever been a cardinal belief with Christian people. But this unity, earnestly desired by Christ and enjoined by His apostles, is different both in kind and in degree from that which the religious world is now seeking. And it is only within the last few years that there has been found within the church any desire at all for the sort of union the denominational world is seeking, a union which ignores Paul's injunction that "all speak the same thing, and ... be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment," but tries rather to achieve a religious synthesis by refusing to talk of the things that divide.

In the church, as in the denominational world, this sentiment is traceable directly to a weakening of doctrinal convictions. There has grown up a generation of people who are members of the church of Christ for precisely the same reason that their friends and acquaintances are members of the Baptist and Methodist churches, because their parents before them were members. They are Christians not because of conviction but by accident of birth, being born into a Christian family rather than into a Methodist or Lutheran family. There is another large, and ever-increasing group who have "joined" (literally) the church under the emotional appeal of an evangelist without having first been taught.

These two groups constitute the most serious threat today to the purity of the church and her loyalty to the teaching of Christ. Because they have no deep rooted convictions, and because they are without doctrinal stamina, they have the typical sectarian and denominational attitude toward the church and her work.


It is these groups who decry "hard preaching," who would not only permit, but encourage, the local minister to affiliate with the pastors' alliance, who are so sweet-spirited that they cannot bear to hear error exposed in the pulpit.

### **The Way Out**

That we are facing a crisis in the present life of New Testament Christianity should be evident to all thinking people. Although our position is precarious, it is by no means discouraging. For the evidence is accumulating that the churches are awakening to the situation.

And once awakened, the way to salvation from the present crisis is clearly indicated. It lies along two distinct paths, the first of which is indoctrination. Every member in the church must be taught the "rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God." The Book of Acts must again be brought into the curriculum of church teaching. The line, and the reason for it, between Christianity and denominationalism must be clearly and decisively drawn.

But if our first line of attack against the present danger is indoctrination, our second and equally important line must be evangelization. Church history shows that in periods of intense and fervent evangelism there has always been a corresponding growth in the moral and doctrinal purity of the church. It is only when the church ceases to work that she exposes herself to the insidious influence of false teaching. The religion of Jesus Christ is a thrilling challenge, not a soothing opiate. The church must never lose sight of the fact that she is a fighting army. She has neither time nor inclination for truce or parley. Satan has no compromise which she can accept; and she has nothing to offer him but the cutting blades of a two-



edged sword.

The church must be militant and relentless in her opposition to error and sin, tireless and unyielding in her efforts to "make disciples of all the nations." Indoctrination, evangelization-- herein, and herein only, lies our salvation.

## PRACTICE RIGHTEOUSNESS

We have a choice to either do what is right or do what is wrong. As followers of Christ, it is important that we choose to do what is right.

However, there are many who have the misconception that if we are Christians, then the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. This means that even if we do what is wrong, the perfect righteousness of Christ "covers" us so that God only sees that and not our sins.

It is certainly true that one can only be "righteous" if God declares him to be righteous. Yet who is it that God declares to be righteous?

John contrasted two different types of behavior – practicing sin and practicing righteousness (1 John 3:4, 7). Notice what he said about the latter: "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous" (1 John 3:7). Righteousness necessarily involves action on our part. We must do what is right. Or, to use the terminology from earlier in this letter, we are to "walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light" (1 John 1:7).

So practice righteousness. We can only be righteous if God declares us to be righteous. For this to happen, we must strive to be like Him by following His will that has been revealed in His word.

–Andy Sochor

## ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOUR?

Many churches teach that to be saved, all a person has to do is accept Jesus Christ as his personal savior. Assuming they mean the same as believing "with all thine heart" (Acts 8:37), accepting Christ as your personal savior is a good thing. The problem is accepting Christ is not all a person has to do to be saved.

To show this, we can substitute accept Jesus Christ as personal savior for believeth in Mark 16:16a. The passage would read: "He that accepts Jesus Christ as his personal savior and is baptized shall be saved."

The truth is: accepting Christ and obeying Christ are both required. Talking about Jesus, Hebrews 5:9b reads he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Matthew 7:21 proves the same as it says "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Acts 10:35 teaches "he that ... worketh righteousness, is accepted with God." James 2:24 says "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Revelation 20:11-15 reads "they were judged every man according to their works." Obedience is required to become saved (Acts 2:38), and obedience is required to stay saved (Revelation 2:10b).

Galatians 5:6 teaches that what avails is faith which worketh by love. We must have all three attributes. Leaving off faith won't work, even if we possess the other two attributes. Neither will leaving off working. And neither will leaving off love.

– Patrick Donahue