



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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DENOMINATIONS DO NOT MAKE UP THE CHURCH

Ivie Powell

*By turning to the Bible, can you find the **Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Episcopalian Church, Jehovah Witness Church, Mormon Church, Presbyterian Church** or any other denomination?*

One would think as often as people use the word “church” they would know its meaning, but that is not necessarily the case. Many think the church is the building. Still others think in terms of entertainment and recreation. Probably the great majority believe the church is a denomination among denominations. The reason there is so much confusion regarding the church can be attributed to many factors, such as prejudice, pride, laziness and ignorance. So imbedded is denominationalism in the hearts of people that it has blinded them to the simplicity of undenominational, pre-denominational, New Testament Christianity.

What then is the church? The word “church” appears in the Bible eighty-one times and “churches” thirty-seven times. As stated, the vast majority of religious people think in terms of a denomination when the word church is mentioned. So entrenched is the concept that it is extremely difficult to disassociate the two in their thinking. Guy N. Woods well defined the word church when he wrote:

The word “church” in our English translations is the rendering of the Greek word *ecclesia* (pronounced ek-la-sia), from *ek*, signifying “out of” and *kaleo*, “to call” thus, literally, “to call out.” It is

used in the New Testament to designate the body of people which, in full and free response to the preaching of Jesus as Lord believed his word and obeyed his will. The steps, particularly taken in this response to him are faith (Jno. 8:24); repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38); confession (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37); and baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). (Guy N. Woods, *“What Is The Church?”* The Spiritual Sword, Vol. 1, No.4, July 1970).

The term “denomination” when applied to religious groups has reference to division. Thus the concept of “choosing the church of your choice.” Of course, such a choice is totally against the prayer of our Lord when He prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:20-21). Religious division was also condemned by Paul in First Corinthians 1:10, *“Now I beseech you, brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* Therefore, denominationalism is inherently sinful and exists in direct opposition to the teaching of Christ and His apostles!

The view that the church is made up of all denominations is totally

without any scriptural support! As pointed out by Guy N. Woods:

All denominational bodies have arisen centuries this side of the apostolic age and thus sustain no relation to the body of Christ. . . This simple historic fact should not be overlooked that all religious denominations, having originated since the close of the apostolic age, are too recent to be the church of which our Lord spoke when he said, “Upon this rock I will build my church (Matt. 16:18).” *Questions and Answers*, Guy N. Woods, pp. 205,206).

The religious world has for years advocated “unity in diversity” which is not only a contradiction of terms, but without biblical support! The facts are that denominationalism creates division; promotes agnosticism, and in many cases atheism!

Pause and give careful consideration to the following questions: By turning to the Bible, can you find the **Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Episcopalian Church, Jehovah Witness Church, Mormon Church, Presbyterian Church** or any other denomination? On the other hand, by turning to the Bible, can one find the **church of Christ**

(Continued on page 31)
Denominations...



Editorial...

THE BIBLE IS UNIQUE #1

Garland M. Robinson

Have you heard statements like these? “You really don’t believe what you read in the Bible do you?” “The Bible is just another book, everyone knows it’s not true.” “Just look at all the books that show the science of this world.” “The Bible is dead and irrelevant to modern society.” It is sad indeed that so many people have no respect for the Word of God whatsoever. Such irreverence of the Holy Scriptures will torment them through eternity in a devil’s hell.

Schools of higher learning across America and around the world (and lesser schools as well) think of themselves as champions of atheism and evolution. Professors degrade and ridicule the Bible in front of their students and make fun at the thought of anyone reading it or believing it. Young people are being brain washed to believe anything and everything but the Bible. One said, “we can’t believe in God to save us — there’s no such being and no need of being saved. Saved from what? The Bible is nothing but myths and legends — a book of fairy tales. We must believe in ourselves and our own achievements.”

On the other hand (for which we are very thankful), many are proud to revere the Bible and are thrilled to read and study it. Can that be said of you? Are you thrilled to learn the will of God? How tragic that many say it’s God’s word but hardly pick it up and study its pages to learn of salvation. Only the truth can save your soul (John 8:32).

The point is, we can, we better, believe in God and his Holy Word the Bible. As a matter of fact, “...**without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him**” (Heb. 11:6). Faith comes by hearing and reading the Bible (Rom. 10:17). Paul proudly proclaimed, “**I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that be-**

lieveth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

The Bible is the message of salvation and without it, no one can be saved. It is God speaking to man. The Bible is infallible because it came from God. “*All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Men think it’s foolish, but it is God’s power to save. “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*” (1 Cor. 1:18). Jesus said, “*It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me*” (John 6:45). For this very reason, we must broadcast its message to the whole world (Mark 16:15).

Friend, the Bible is different than all the books that men have ever produced. It is perfect. It is true. It is God’s holy Word. It is the operations manual for the entire planet. It is not a “blind leap in the dark” to believe it. Faith in the Bible is grounded in evidence — empirical, practical, pragmatic, evidence.

Professor M. Monier Williams (1819-1899), former Boden professor of Sanskrit (University of Oxford, England) and known for the Sanskrit-English dictionary, spent 42 years studying Eastern books and said in comparing them with the Bible:

Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table; but place your own Holy Bible on the right side - all by itself, all alone — and with a wide gap between them. For, ...there is a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly, and forever. ... A veritable gulf which cannot be

bridged over by any science of religious thought.

The Bible is unique. Webster defines the word by saying: “1. one and only; single; sole. 2. different from all others; having no like or equal.”

The Bible is unique in its Continuity. The Bible is a book:

- 1) Written over a span of 1,600 years.
- 2) Written over 60 generations.
- 3) Written by 40 plus authors from every walk of life, including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, prophets, statesmen, scholars, etc. For example:
 - Moses, trained in the universities of Egypt
 - Peter, a fisherman
 - Amos, a herdsman
 - Joshua, a military general
 - Nehemiah, a cupbearer
 - Daniel, a prime minister
 - Luke, a doctor
 - Solomon, a king
 - Matthew, a tax collector
 - Paul, a tentmaker
- 4) Written in different places:
 - Moses in the wilderness
 - Jeremiah in a dungeon
 - Daniel on a hillside and in a palace
 - Paul inside prison walls
 - Luke while travelling
 - John on the isle of Patmos
 - Others in the rigors of a military campaign
- 5) Written at different times:
 - David in times of war
 - Solomon in times of peace
- 6) Written during different moods. Some writing from the heights of joy and others writing from the depths of sorrow and despair.
- 7) Written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe
- 8) Written in three languages:
 - Hebrew*: the language of the Old Testament. In 2 Kings 18:26,28 it is called “the Jew’s language.”
 - Aramaic*: was the “adopted language” of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great (6th-4th century B.C.).
 - Greek*: the New Testament language. It was the international language at the time of Christ.
- 9) Its subject matter includes hundreds of topics that men consider controversial. Yet it speaks on these matters with harmony and continuity from Genesis to Reve-

lation. There is one unfolding story: “God’s redemption of mankind.” The Bible does not contain even one contradiction.

The Bible is unique in its circulation throughout the world. It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in history. There have been more copies produced of its entirety and more portions and selections of it printed than any other book. One researcher pointed out many years ago that for the Foreign Bible Society to meet its demands, it had to publish: “one copy every three seconds day and night; 22 copies every minute day and night; 1,369 copies every hour day and night; 32,876 copies every day in the year. And, it is deeply interesting to know that this amazing number of Bibles were dispatched to various parts of

the world in 4,583 cases weighing 490 tons.”

The Bible is unique in its translation. It was the first book ever to be translated (Septuagint: Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, c. 250 B.C.). The Encyclopedia Britannica says that by “1966 the whole Bible had appeared...in 240 languages and dialects, ... one or more whole books of the Bible in 739 additional ones, a total publication of 1,280 languages.” Three thousand Bible translators between 1950-1960 were at work translating the Scriptures. According to a Google search, “As of November 2014 the full Bible has been translated into 531 languages, and 2,883 languages have at least some portion of the Bible.”

The point regarding all these translations is to take note of the fact that the Bible has such great interest

among the masses that people around the world want to read it in their own language. It is recognized as the most unique book!

Even though there are multiple translations (versions) of the Scriptures in English (one index lists 100+), the majority of them are not completely accurate and trustworthy. They “add to” and “take from.” They give man’s idea of what they think God meant instead of actually translating what God said. I recommend the tried and true King James Version. Its existence for the last 400 years is responsible for more conversions to Christ and more devotion to the Lord than any other. It contains no fatal error like scores of others do.

Make sure you read the May issue where this vital lesson is continued.

JESUS IS OUR PROPHET, HIGH PRIEST, AND KING

Roger D. Campbell

The epistle to the Hebrews, which shows that through Jesus we have a better covenant, better promises, and a new and living way (8:6; 10:20), begins with these words, “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*” (1:1-3).

Who is this Jesus we serve? In the above-quoted verses, as well as others, the Bible shows that He is our prophet, priest, and king. In the Old Testament we read that David was both king and prophet. We also read that Jeremiah was both priest and prophet, but only in Jesus the Messiah do we find One Who is all three: 1) prophet, 2) priest, and 3) king.

Jesus Is Our Prophet. In the Bible the word “prophet” means one who speaks for or in place of another. Thus, a prophet of God is one who

speaks for Him (Exodus 4:16; 7:1). In Old Testament times, God spoke to men through prophets (Heb. 1:1). Through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20,21), God gave those prophets the very words they spoke to men on His behalf. God told Jeremiah, “*For thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. ... Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth*” (Jer. 1:7,9). In the early church there were also prophets through whom the Holy Spirit revealed God’s plan to save man in the Christ by the Gospel (Eph. 3:5,6). The Bible also says that the Holy Spirit edified the church through those first-century prophets (1 Cor. 14:3).

The greatest prophet of God, however, is the Lord Jesus. Over 1400 years before Jesus’ birth, Moses prophesied of Him, saying, “*The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; ... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him*” (Deut. 18:15,18). It is God’s will that all men today hear Jesus (Matt. 17:5)

for the Father speaks to us in or through the Son (Heb. 1:2). One who refuses to listen to and follow this Great Prophet shall be destroyed (Acts 3:22,23). Jesus, as a true spokesman for God, taught only the message of the Father. He said, “*My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. ... I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him ... the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me*” (John 7:16; 8:26; 14:24).

Friends, there is only one true religion that is pleasing to God — the teaching and scheme of redemption that He Himself has given us from heaven. That teaching and redemption comes to mankind only through Jesus the Christ, the most unique prophet of God. In Him, God speaks to us through the Gospel (Heb. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:14), and only in Him do we have the remission of sins (Eph. 1:7).

Jesus Is Our High Priest. The work of a priest and prophet are not the same. Through His prophets, God spoke to mankind. Through priests, men came before Jehovah with their worship. The Levitical priests of the Old Testament were instructed to put a difference between holy and unholy,

between clean and unclean, and to teach the children of Israel all the statutes of Jehovah (Lev. 10:10,11). In addition, they stood daily and ministered, offering sacrifices (Heb. 10:11). According to the Law of Moses, there was always to be one high priest. Of that system it is written, *“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins”* (Heb. 5:1). Also, *“But into the second (that is the most holy place, rdc) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people”* (Heb. 9:7). Through all of their service, the Levitical priests were to help bring the people of God to Him.

The book of Hebrews declares that Christians have only one high priest. Jesus is the first and last high priest of Christianity. *“We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”* (8:1). Jesus serves as *“high priest over the house of God”* (10:21). Just as under the old law, the high priest had to take blood into the most holy place for the atonement of the entire nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), so Jesus, as our high priest, had to die on the cross, then enter into heaven (the spiritual holy of holies) with His sacrifice for our atonement. *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”* (Heb. 9:24).

There were many faithful high priests that served in Israel, but none could compare to Jesus our great high priest. The Levitical high priests were servants, but Jesus is more, for He is the Son of God (Heb. 4:14). The Levitical high priests offered many animal sacrifices through the years, but Jesus *“offered one sacrifice for sins for ever”* (Heb. 10:12). He offered Himself! Levitical high priests were mere men who sinned out of weakness, but Jesus is *“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens”* (Heb. 7:26). No earthly priest can compare to the Christ! Thank God that through Jesus’ blood He *“by himself purged our sins”* (Heb. 1:2) so that we might be reconciled to God (Rom. 5:9-11).

Jesus Is Our King. While a

prophet speaks to man for God and a priest helps man worship God, a king (whom God has appointed) serves as ruler over God’s kingdom. Upon returning to heaven, Jesus *“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (Heb. 1:3). He is now ruling over the house of God, which is the church of Christ (Heb. 10:21; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rom. 16:16). The Christ is now *“the head over all things to the church”* (Eph. 1:22). Does He sit on an earthly throne? No. He told Pilate, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). Jesus’ kingdom is thus not earthly, as many expect, but spiritual.

When did Jesus begin to reign as king? Answer, when His kingdom came into existence on the earth. When was that? On the first Jewish day of Pentecost after Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 2). On that day the apostle Peter told the Jews who were assembled in Jerusalem that God had fulfilled His promise to David, that even as Peter spoke to them, Jesus was sitting on the throne of David, meaning that He was ruling as king (Acts 2:31-35). Peter further declared that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ (2:36). Friends, **the church of Christ is His kingdom on the earth** (Matt. 16:18,19). When the church obeys Jesus’ teaching, then the church is really obeying its Head, its King (Eph. 5:24).

There can be no doubt about it: the kingdom of the Christ existed in the first century. How do we know? Because saints were members of it! In 62-63 A.D. Paul wrote to the brethren at Colosse saying God *“...hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”* (Col. 1:13). Since people were in the Lord’s kingdom, then His kingdom already existed. And, because His kingdom existed then, He was already King at that time! King Herod the Great, Pilate, the Jews, and many others tried to prevent Jesus from becoming King, but they could not! Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). How long will He continue to reign? *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; ²⁵For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet, ²⁶The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

How wonderful that we have such a great Prophet, High Priest, and King! May God help each of us to serve Him zealously out of a heart filled with gratitude and love.

120 Fawn Dr.
Chattanooga, TN 37412

CONTRIBUTIONS

Robert P. Villegas	\$40
Sylvia C/C, Sylvia, KS.....	\$500
Parkview C/C, Odessa, TX.....	\$50
Eastside C/C,	
Locust Grove, OK.....	\$1,000
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Beginning Balance	\$6,187.80
Contributions	\$3,235.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$1,808.86
Supplies/Ink	\$43.06
Ending Balance	\$7,570.88

We have a fund set aside for equipment and repairs. If you would like to contribute toward it, please make that note on your contribution. We are humbled by so many loving brethren that make this work possible. You are a blessing! Let us work together in the Lord’s vineyard.

Elder's COLUMN

Ezekiel, a prophet of God, is reminded in almost identical words some thirty chapters apart, that he is to be “a watchman unto the house of Israel” (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7). Those who profess to be godly people often **live** as if there is no danger or consequences to their actions. A truth that must not be overlooked is that if there is no danger, there is no need for a warning from watchmen. God is gracious and loving to remind man of his mortal enemy who “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

What God said to Ezekiel about the obligations of watchmen is as valid today as it was then. Those who serve today as elders of a congregation of the Lord’s people are to “watch in behalf of” the souls they oversee (Heb. 13:17). Men serving as watchmen (elders) will surely be held accountable for failure to fulfill their duty. But may we also remember that “all” have an obligation to “watch” (Mark 13:35,37). Let us learn from Ezekiel a couple of indispensable traits of godly watchmen.

A godly watchman is responsible to: “Hear the word at [His] mouth” (Ezek. 33:7)! It should be understood that a watchman is of no value if he does not have eyes with which to see and a mouth with which to speak. Many people, however, put great confidence in watchmen who have perfect vision and loud voices but are useless because of lockjaw. They dare not sound forth any warning regarding danger to the soul for fear of disturbing the flock.

Thus, the first obligation of a godly watchman is to hear and heed the Word that God speaks. God speaks to us today through His Son, and His Son through His Word (Heb. 1:2; John 12:48). One who will not hear and heed God’s Word will **never** qualify as God’s watchman!

“Give them warning from me” (Ezek. 33:7)! Warnings are sounded forth in this world on a regular basis. Meteorologists warn of the impending danger of hurricanes and tornadoes. Law enforcement agencies warn of escaped criminals and certain threats to society.

THE WATCHMEN WHO WILL NOT HEAR, WILL NOT WARN

Marvin L. Weir

Many congregations learn before selecting elders that those who have not demonstrated they will hear and heed God’s Word, will not sound forth the soul-saving warning!

Financial planners warn of the downside of certain investments. Physicians warn patients of certain physical conditions and test results. Manufacturers warn about recalls of certain foods because of contamination. People desire and expect to be warned about these matters.

Warnings from God’s Word regarding spiritual matters are generally not welcome. People say, “Don’t judge, it is nobody’s business, everybody else does it (as if that makes it legal and right), this world is all that matters, or I deserve to be happy and this is how I’m going to live.” People do not want to be told “no.” They don’t want to be told “it’s sinful and wrong.” They don’t want to be told “it’s immoral and detrimental to society.”

God told Ezekiel, however, “*give them warning from me.*” The soul is more valuable than the physical body and earthly matters, even though most people do not think so (Matt. 16:26). Watchmen who are devoted to God know there is impending danger in this world and are willing to warn people of such danger. Watchmen devoted to God understand they are responsible to warn people of soul damning sins and Satan’s snares! As was true in Ezekiel’s day, the same is true today: “*When I say unto the wicked, O wicked [man], thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked [man] shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand*” (Ezek. 33:8).

We also learn of the responsibility of those who are warned. Let us observe:

Their condition! People may convince themselves their sinful actions are no big deal, but sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness (transgression of God’s law) without repentance leads to eternal death. This death is the result of separation from God. So many people living in sin are convinced God is with them and blessing them when God clearly states, “*Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ²But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid [his]*

face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

Their opportunity! Those living contrary to the Lord’s will are given an opportunity to repent when they are warned by God’s watchmen. It is tragic to be deluded and deceived regarding sacred matters, but it is an act of mercy for God to allow His watchmen to warn of those dangers. The warning to repent or perish (Luke 13:3) is given in love of one’s soul. John recorded in his Gospel account, “*He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (3:36).

Their responsibility! Ezekiel, God’s watchman, was told: “*Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul*” (Ezek. 33:9). The warning is to turn, change directions, repent. The unashamed warning of the consequences of spurning God’s law may be despised and the watchman may be considered behind the times and out of touch with society’s demands, but hearing and heeding God’s Word is the only thing that will save the soul!

We see then that both the watchmen and the warned have obligations and responsibilities for which they will be held accountable. God takes “*no pleasure in the death of the wicked*” but desires “*the wicked turn from his wicked way and live*” (Ezek. 33:11).

What a terrible fate awaits those who have been warned of their sins but steadfastly refuse to repent! But the most nauseating and despicable thing is the professed watchman of God who knows what God’s Word says but refuses to sound forth the warning to those living in sin! May congregations learn before selecting elders that those who have not demonstrated they will hear and heed God’s Word will not sound forth the soul-saving warning! Let us make sure that our brethren’s and friend’s blood is not on our hands!

484 CR 44700
Blossom, TX 75416

UNDERSTANDING GRACE #4

(GRACE LIBERATES)

Bill Boyd

***Grace does not liberate us from obedience to the truth of the Gospel.
It liberates us from the Law of Moses.***

Galatians 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” One of the great truths in the book of Galatians is the liberty and freedom that we have in Christ. It echoes John 8:32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Paul was wise to appeal to Galatian’s love of freedom. Galatia was named for the ancient Gauls who had settled in the central regions of Asia Minor. Freedom had long been a distinguishing virtue of their cultural thinking. Otherwise known as the Celts, these people carried their love of freedom with them to France, the British Isles, and on to America. The Romans conquered them, but the Galatians had a reputation of being hard to rule.

Paul had been preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles near Galatia on his first missionary journey. Upon his return to Antioch he encountered false teachers who were saying the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). After the apostles and elders met in Jerusalem to confirm the truth concerning this controversy, Paul went on a second missionary journey and passed through the region of Galatia itself. “They had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia” (Acts 16:6). He went through Galatia again on his third missionary journey on his way to Ephesus. “He departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening the disciples” (Acts 18:23).

The false teachers who were binding circumcision on Gentile converts must have been hot on his heels, because in Galatians 1:6-7 he wrote, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed

from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” To refute the perverted gospel they had been taught is why he wrote the letter to the churches in Galatia.

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul begins with his common greeting of “grace to you.” It was Paul’s desire that the Galatians know and enjoy the favor of God. When you read about “grace” in Galatians, think about God’s “good will” toward man. Notice carefully what he says in Galatians 1:6 about “the grace of Christ.” Paul had called the Galatians into the grace of Christ and false brethren were calling them out of it. Notice Galatians 2:4, “And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.” Even after the meeting with the elders and apostles in Jerusalem, these false brethren were still teaching the Gentiles they had to be circumcised after the manner of Moses. This is the context of Paul’s use of the words “faith,” “grace,” and “law” in the following passages: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God” (Gal. 2:19). “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21). “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth” (Gal. 3:1). “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are

written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹²And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. ¹³Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: ¹⁴That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:10-14). “If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. ²²But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. ²³But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. ²⁴Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:21b-24). “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4-5). “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. ¹¹I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Gal. 4:9-11). “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. ²Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. ⁵For we through

the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:1-6).

Grace liberates from the “law,” but it is evident that the “law” (in the context of Paul’s epistle to the Galatians) is the “law of Moses,” not the “law of Christ.” Beware of those who take passages from Galatians out of context, for they too often become guilty of preaching a perverted gospel.

Grace liberates from the law of Moses, but it does not free us from our obligation to “obey the truth.” “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth” (Gal. 5:7). “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth” (Gal. 3:1)? The truth Paul speaks of is the truth of the Gospel. “And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: ⁵To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (Gal. 2:4-5). So, the truth of the Gospel Paul preached had “obedience” in it, and also, the truth of the Gospel Paul preached had a “walk” in it. When Paul wrote, “I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:14), he was referring to their lack of obedience.

Grace liberates from the law of Moses, but does not free us from the obligation to “walk uprightly” according to the Gospel of Christ. “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:16-17). Walking in the Spirit is walking in accordance to the truth of the Gospel that Paul preached by the power of the Spirit. Paul wrote, “If ye be led of the Spirit ye are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18) because the Spirit was not teaching the Galatians to walk in accordance with the law of Moses as the Jews taught, but in accordance with the truth of the Gospel the Holy Spirit taught.

Grace liberates from the law of Moses, but does not free us from the obligation to “love one

another” and to “serve one another” in love. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal. 5:13-14).

Grace liberates from the law of Moses, but does not free us from “well doing.” “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ⁸For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. ⁹And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. ¹⁰As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:7-10).

Grace liberates from the law of Moses, but does not free us from all “rules.” The Galatians had a problem with rules. They did not like rules. They were difficult to control. I understand that. I still have enough “Gaul” in me so that I do not particularly care for rules either, unless they happen to be according to my own notion, but I know the difference in man’s rules and God’s rules. With the Galatian’s cultural aversion to rules, Paul “marveled” (Gal. 1:6) they would allow themselves to be ruled by false brethren (Gal. 2:4). He chides them, “Are you so foolish” (Gal. 3:3)? “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage” (Gal. 4:9)? “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law” (Gal. 4:21)? It is surprising they would have allowed false brethren to impose rules on them that came from the Law of Moses. But their freedom from those rules did not free them from all rules. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. ¹⁶And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:15-16).

Grace liberates from the Law of Moses, but grace does not liberate us from “water baptism.” Many refuse baptism because they say they want to be saved by grace, but salvation through baptism is salvation by the grace of Christ. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in

Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

As Paul began the epistle to the Galatians expressing his desire that they would know and enjoy the grace of God (Gal. 1:3), and so also he brings it to a close in Galatians 6:18 saying, “Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

Paul wrote so the Galatians would know that the grace of Christ liberated them from circumcision and the Law of Moses, but the grace he taught did not free them from: 1) obeying the truth, 2) walking in the Spirit, 3) loving one another and serving one another in love, 4) doing good unto all men, 5) all rules, and 6) neither did it liberate them from baptism. Hear it! Grace does not liberate from baptism. According to the Gospel Paul preached, salvation by grace was for all who would be baptized in obedience to the truth and walk in accordance with its rule.

647 Finger Bluff Rd.
Morrison, TN 37357

Denominations...

(Continued from page 25)

(Rom. 16:16)?

Every diligent student of the Bible knows that none of the apostles were members of any denomination. It takes something more than the Bible or less than the Bible to be a member of a denomination (divided, division)! However, to become a Christian, one must simply follow the Bible!

The church of our Lord came into existence on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ as recorded in Acts 2. On that day about 3,000 were baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), and the Lord added them to the church (Acts 2:47, all the saved are in the church). Observe, carefully, please, that their obedience to the gospel did NOT produce one single denomination! They simply became Christians, members of the body of Christ.

Beloved, if responsible people today will do exactly as they did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), they will become Christians, members of the church of Christ, the body of Christ, and not a denomination!

PO Box 92
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JESUS CHRIST OR MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad, according to history, was born in the city of Mecca (Arabian Peninsula) in 570 A.D. When he was about 40 years of age, while spending time meditating in a cave nearby, he claimed that the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him that he was to be God's messenger. Over the next 22 years he claimed revelation from God (Allah) which is known as the Qur'an (Koran), or "Holy Book" of the Muslims.

Muhammad makes the claim that Jesus Christ was just a prophet (among many) and that he (Muhammad) was the greatest messenger and prophet sent by God; and, therefore is the final authority from God. According to Muhammad, people should take his word over the teachings of Jesus Christ. However, since Jesus fulfilled hundreds of Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the coming Messiah (Acts 3:17-26), the Son of God (Luke 1:26-35), and Muhammad did not fulfill even one prophecy, who do we believe, God and the Bible, or Muhammad? Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 7:14 explicitly. Matthew applies Isaiah 7:14 and defines the word "Immanuel" for us: "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us*" (Matt. 1:23).

When one places Muhammad and his Qur'an under the scrutiny of Paul's inspired pen, it is found wanting: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other*

gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). Since Muhammad claimed to have received his Qur'an from an angel over 500 years after Jesus' death, ascension, proclamation of the Gospel and the establishment of the timely kingdom/church planned by God, who do we believe, God, Paul and the Bible, or Muhammad?

A significant point that cannot be overlooked is Paul's statement: "*To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses...*" (2 Cor. 5:19). Paul, in his Roman letter, further labors the point, saying, "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶To declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*" (Rom. 3:24-26). John also speaks of the "propitiation," saying, "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 4:10).

If we accept Jesus being reduced to just an antiquated prophet means that mankind remains in his sins and God becomes an unloving, uncaring and unjust God. Again, I say, Who do we believe, God and the Bible, or Muhammad?

Joe W. Nichols
PO Box 91, Bastrop, LA 71221

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