

Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 15, No. 12

December 2004

TAKING THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE

Tom Wacaster

“**H**ermeneutics” is the science of interpretation. The word is derived from the Greek mythological character, “Hermes,” the messenger of the gods and the interpreter of Jupiter. Through the years there have been a number of Bible scholars who have taken the time and effort to set forth, in writing, a systematic approach to the study and interpretation of the scriptures. The most notable works are D. R. Dungan’s *Hermeneutics*, and Clinton Lockhart’s *Principles of Interpretation*. Both of these books are still in print, and I recommend them for your consideration. Hermeneutics, then, is the science of interpreting the Scriptures.

When one properly studies a particular passage in God’s word, he is said to “exegete” the passage. “Exegetis” simply means to “lead out” or “draw out of.” It is the application of the principles of hermeneutics in bringing out the meaning of any particular passage. We could very likely write on the science of interpretation with all its varied principles and take a year or more to do so. But there is one important principle we want to address here. *“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the **sum of them**”* (Psalm 139:17). A fundamental principle involved in the interpretation of the scriptures is the need to take the whole of God’s word into consideration in our search for truth. It is the “sum” of God’s word which must be obeyed, not just a portion thereof. Call it what you will, whether a “balance” of scripture, or as Paul put it, the “whole

council of God” (Acts 20:27), the end result is that we cannot pick and choose from scripture as we would food from a cafeteria line.

Let’s apply this principle to the scheme of redemption. God’s plan for man’s salvation cannot be found in any single passage of scripture. If I would learn what I must do to be saved, I must carefully examine the whole of God’s word to determine what it takes to receive forgiveness of sins. To take any single passage to the neglect of others will certainly spell doom for the sincere but misled soul. The late William Cline once wrote, “The Bible does not lend itself to false doctrine for it is balanced in its content, complete in its message, and perfect in every way.” The mistake of isolating one passage and pressing it to the exclusion of others is a failure to respect the truth presented by the Psalmist.

The Bible plainly teaches that men must *hear* the word. “How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard” (Rom. 10:14)? The Bible also teaches that men must *believe* (Heb. 11:6; John 3:16; 8:24). But the Bible likewise teaches that men must *repent* (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31). In addition, the Bible teaches that men must *confess* with the mouth that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 16:16-18). Finally, the Bible teaches that *baptism* doth also now save us (1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

In view of the obligatory nature of each of these commands, why is it that most of the protestant denominational

world elevates “faith” above, and often to the exclusion of, all other commands? Is there not some way we can harmonize these passages, and, by taking the “sum” of God’s word, come to a conclusion that does not pit one passage against the other? Indeed there is.

If **faith** saves, and most certainly it does, then what role does “repentance” play in the process of salvation? Is it essential? To deny its essentiality is to indict our Lord and Master, for He Himself stated, *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). The question we must ask, therefore, is “What **KIND** of faith saves a man from his sins?” Taking the “sum” of God’s word, we can only conclude that the faith that saves is a faith that **INCLUDES repentance**. Men have sought to “get around” the force of this argument by suggesting that repentance precedes faith. But if repentance is produced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), how can repentance be generated without faith in God?

What about **confession**? If we must confess “with the mouth” (Rom. 10:9-10), what is the relationship between saving faith and this “good confession”? Once again, the faith that saves is a faith that **INCLUDES** the good confession.

What, then, shall we do with **baptism**? If baptism “doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:21), what relationship does faith sustain to this act that “also

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The Whole Of Scripture...



Editorial...

LESSONS FROM MALACHI #1

Garland M. Robinson

Heart felt devotion, fervent singing, humble prayer, sincere offering and righteous living come before acceptable worship. Our Lord today requires the first and the best, just as He always has done.

In the days of the prophet Malachi, over a hundred years had passed since the people had returned from captivity. The fervor and enthusiasm of rebuilding the city and temple had long passed. They were settled down comfortably in their indifference. The blessings from the Lord had ceased and the people and priests were asking why. The answer was right in front of them but they couldn't see it. They didn't want to see it. They would not acknowledge their guilt of departing from the right ways of the Lord. When they left God, He left them.

Malachi, as all the faithful prophets before him, pleaded for the Lord's people to repent and return unto Jehovah. In chapter two and verse two we read, *"If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart."* In chapter four and verse four he wrote, *"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments."*

As always, many great lessons can be learned from these things written so long ago (cf. Rom. 15:4).

GOD LOVES US

1:2-3: *"I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."*

God loved them but they didn't

see how given their present circumstances. God's proof of his love was in the fact that the descendants of Israel (Jacob) had been blessed through the centuries while the descendants of Esau (his twin brother) had been laid waste. Israel had survived the captivity and were still a nation.

How often today do the Lord's people suffer wrong at the hands of evil doers and endure other hardships in this world and so often do not count their many blessings. May God help us to quit whining and complaining and wake up and smell the roses! The Lord said we need not fear what men may do to us because they cannot touch our soul (Matt. 10:28). Even if our lives are forfeited in this world, there's a better land awaiting us (Rev. 2:10). The saints of God will triumph in the end. One day the tables will be turned. The faithful will hear, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:34). The wicked on the other hand will hear, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matt. 25:41).

UNACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

1:6-7: *"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is con-*

temptible."

The priests, the one's authorized to offer sacrifice for themselves and the people, held the Lord in contempt. They despised God's holy name and polluted His altar. They, of all people, knew better. They side-stepped and sought to short-cut their duty in offering the blind, lame and sick animals. God had always desired the first and the best, not the worst and the last. The priests went through the motions of worship, but it was contemptible and disgusting to the Lord. He did not accept it.

How often today do worshipers offer unto God that which costs them nothing (cf. 2 Sam. 24:24)? They go through the motions of worship. They're present in body where worship is conducted. They move their lips in song, bow their heads in prayer and place tokens in the collection, but their worship is vain in that they despise the worship of God. God will not accept it any more than He did in Malachi's day (Mal. 1:10). They are like those the Lord spoke about in Matthew 15:8-9, *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."*

Heart felt devotion, fervent singing, humble prayer, sincere offering and righteous living come before acceptable worship. Our Lord today requires the first and the best, just as He always has done. *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"* (Matt. 6:33).

Liberals despise simple, unpretentious worship. They complain that it is cold, drab, dull and lifeless. They proclaim it as monotonous and wearisome (cf. Mal. 1:13). Since they think of it as such, that is exactly what it is — at least as far as they are concerned. They seek to jazz it up and pump it full of innovations that appear to make it meaningful to church goers. They fail to recognize one major flaw in their hip-hip-hooray. That is, God does not ask US what WE want, what WE think is pleasing, what makes US feel good or what appeals to would-be worshipers. God specifies what HE wants, what HE desires, what HE has commanded. Man has no say-so in the matter. The Lord does not ask

us our opinion or what we believe will draw large crowds.

When will men learn to respect God's inspired Word? When will men learn there are no short-cuts or substitutions in obeying God's will? They will all learn — for sure — but then it will be too late!

DISDAIN FOR MARRIAGE

2:11-16: *“Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.”*

Mixed marriages, marriages to the heathens that worshiped other gods had caused their heart and lives to be unacceptable to God. From the beginning they had been warned about marrying outside of Israel. *“Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly”* (Deut. 7:3-4).

It is recorded that Solomon *“had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his*

wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father” (1 Kings 11:3-4).

How careful we must be that we do not join ourselves to anyone or anything that will turn our heart away from God. Living a righteous life is hard enough when husband and wife are pulling together. How much more complicated and difficult it becomes when we join ourselves to a child of the devil. We must teach our young people to marry one who will help them go to heaven, not be a hindrance to them and their children.

Those in Malachi's day also showed their disdain for the holy covenant of marriage in putting away their first wife (*“the wife of thy youth”* v.14). The Lord considered it as dealing treacherously (disloyalty, falseness) against her. She, and she alone, was the wife to whom they had become *“one flesh”* (Mal. 2:15; cf. Matt. 19:5-6). Their first wife was their true companion and the one with whom they had made a covenant to live with the rest of their life (Mal. 2:14). They had no right (authority) to put away their wife to marry another. God hates such action. He hates *“putting away”* (Mal. 2:16).

Jesus confirms God's law, which was true from the beginning, in Matthew 19:3-9. *“The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.** They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, **Whosoever shall put away his wife, except***

it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”

This text is plain enough, but men seek every way in the world to get around it. God hates *“putting away”* but with one exception. If one's companion commits fornication, God allows the innocent spouse to *“put away”* the guilty fornicator (Matt. 19:9; 5:32). This is a hard saying and the disciples understood that (v.10). It is serious. It holds eternal consequences. Despite what men think they deserve and regardless of what they desire to make them happy, God's law on divorce and remarriage is clear and has not changed.

If it were not for Matthew 19:9 and 5:32, there would be no exceptions at all in God's marriage law. Jesus said in Luke 16:18, *“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”* Paul wrote in Romans 7:2-3, *“For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”*

Why is it that so many try desperately to do away with Matthew 19:9? Some say it's not a part of the New Testament and therefore does not apply today. Some say it only applies to a Christian married to a Christian and does not apply to a Christian married to a non-Christian or a non-Christian married to a non-Christian. Others say it's true, but all you have to do is repent and say you won't divorce and marry again and you can keep the one you want. Men may despise or dismiss the passage in their own mind and convince others to do the same, but it still stares them in the face. You can't remove it from God's eternal Word. God hates putting away and those who do so and never repent of it, will pay an eternal price with their soul in judgment.

JANUARY 22ND – THE ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICA'S DISTURBING LEGACY

Steven E. Yeatts

Consider it a blessing to live in the United States of America. Though I have traveled outside of America to only two countries (Russia and England) and though I can appreciate other cultures and the value of souls no matter where one lives, I know that America provides the most freedom, most opportunity and most comfort of any country on the planet. That being acknowledged, I strive not to have blinders on when it comes to America's weaknesses either. America is a country, although founded on basic godly principles, has fallen far from those ideals in its 228 years of existence as a Representative Republic. Crime (both personal and property) is a major problem in this country, the God-ordained institution of marriage has become a disposable commodity as the divorce rate hovers around 50%, a militant minority is able to force its views on homosexuality and other moral outrages while the majority does its best "head in the sand" impersonation. When God's Word is abandoned as the standard for objective truth, all of the aforementioned issues are serious concerns as well as the issue that haunts the legacy of this country on a daily basis — murder of the unborn, also known as abortion.

Since January 22, 1973 (Roe v. Wade), America has slaughtered over 44 million babies in the name of "pro-choice." When one strips away the facade of this "pro-choice" label, one will find it to mean pro-death for any child whom the mother deems an inconvenience or a burden in her life. Every 20 seconds, on average, an unborn child is murdered in America. As outraged as humanity was at the Jewish holocaust (and rightly so) that led to the systematic extermination of Jews throughout Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, the six million lives lost in that psychopathic pogrom represents about a four-year total of babies that are violently killed in (or partially out of) the mother's womb in this country in the name of "healthcare."

The potential for being a victim of

some type of violent crime (rape, robbery, murder, terrorism, et.al.) in this country pales in realistic possibility to the premeditated killing done every day in the abortion clinics of America. This legacy will not escape the judgment of the God of heaven who said that among the things He hates are "hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:17). Who is more innocent than a defenseless child whose safe haven in the womb is murderously ruptured by the abortionist's instruments of death?

I feel that God's people have allowed themselves to be duped over the years by the media into thinking that abortion is somehow simply a political issue that has nothing to do with morality. In fact, the very use of the word abortion does not evoke the true impact of what is truly under consideration. What is under consideration is murder. What is under consideration is the invasion of a mother's womb with medical instruments (forceps, scalpels, scissors, suction devices, etc.) and literally chopping up an unborn child whose heart is beating, whose brain is emitting waves of activity, whose body is developing, and who is a living soul (Gen. 2:7; Jer. 1:5; Job 31:15; Psalm 139:13-16). In some even more gruesome cases, known as partial-birth abortion, a baby in the last trimester (6-9 months along) who could live outside of the womb without major medical difficulty is partially delivered (feet first) only to have a pair of scissors jammed in the back of his skull and his brains sucked out with a medical vacuum tube. This is the reality of the murder of the unborn. This is why those who proclaim to be Christians who knowingly stand in agreement with this infanticide by their support of public officials who endorse this heinous sin as a "woman's right to choose" are involved in self-deceit to its sickest extent. Christians are the salt of the earth and as such, we are to influence the world for positive things (Matt. 5:13-16).

Our Saviour loved infants and

children and said of them, "*for of such is the kingdom of God*" (Luke 18:15-16). Dare one who claims Christianity be so brazen as to persist in his support of those who hold up the hands that shed innocent blood, knowing that one day we will stand before the Righteous Judge (Jesus) and give an account for such complicity with evil (2 Cor. 5:10)? God forbid! But nevertheless there are Christians who are less wise than those in the world concerning this matter. Many in the world make a much stronger public stand against murder of the unborn than do those who claim to be New Testament Christians. Why is this so? It seems that many in the church have become as pluralistic as the society that surrounds them, and have blended into the world landscape as so many spiritual chameleons, who have cast off their heavenly hue for the darkness of the world (1 John 2:15-17).

When you wake up on Saturday, January 22, 2005, remind yourself that 32 years ago, the United States Supreme Court made an unconstitutional (but much more serious than that, a SINFUL) decision to allow open season on the unborn in this country and 45 million children later, this sad and sickening legacy moves forward. The only comfort we as Christians can take from over three decades of innocents lost is that they will all be in heaven (2 Sam. 12:23). However, in this life, let us fight against this abomination as efficaciously as we can. If all you can do individually is be informed and refuse to vote for anyone who supports the killing of the unborn, let that be your voice of protest. If you can do more by being involved in right-to-life efforts and education, please fight for the unborn children. Indeed, as Jesus said, "*except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 18:3).

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CAN GOD COMMUNICATE WITH MAN, OR WHAT IS THE VALUE OF GOD'S WORD?

John D. Cotham

How foolish of man to say that God gave man the ability to communicate through a form of communication so inferior that God, Himself, could no longer communicate with His own creature.

If any man desires to introduce something NEW in religious doctrine, he must first attack the Scriptures. He must first try to prove the Scriptures to be insufficient instruction from God. Only when he has caused this doubt in the minds of his listeners can he begin to introduce what he proposes to add or remove from the word of God.

Though it is not a new charge, some preachers in the Lord's church are now saying that man cannot really understand what God wants man to know. Some are saying that "man talk" is so inferior to "God talk" that God can't communicate His wishes to man through Scripture written in "man talk." In reality, what these men are saying is that the Bible, especially the New Testament, is insufficient to tell man all he needs to know.

Think how ridiculous this argument is.

When God made man, He not only gave him a spirit; He also gave him the ability to reason and to communicate what he has reasoned to others. Because man has the ability to reason, God instructs that He can reason with mankind, *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD..."* (Isaiah 1:18). There can be no doubt that communicative speech is given of God. In Genesis 11 men were building a tower toward heaven (the dwelling place of God). It was a futile effort, but God made it even more futile by confusing their communication, *"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not under-*

stand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:6-9).

If man understands anything at all about God it is the fact that God created man to be in servitude to Him by following His communicated will. The real fact is that God could have made man to communicate in any form of language, even "God talk" if He desired. How foolish of man to say that God gave man the ability to communicate through a form of communication so inferior that God, Himself, could no longer communicate with His own creature. This is absurd! In his own "inferior" language, man can communicate on a level that is understood by the 2-3 year old. The same language serves to communicate on the level of a doctorate's dissertation. If man's "inferior" language has such a wide range of communication, don't we know that Almighty God can structure His communication so that mankind can understand exactly what God desires us to know? Why, certainly!

Does God expect man to answer to His communication? Just listen to what God has said in "man talk:" *"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever"* (Deut. 5:29)! In verses 32-33 *"Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the*

ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess." Moses was also inspired to say: *"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up"* (Deut. 6:6-7). Notice, God said the words which He commanded were to be in man's heart, AND that a man could also teach to others what God had taught him.

Next, notice what Christ said about His words (communication) to man, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:47-48). If we can't understand what God has taught us, then we are in a heap of trouble because that's the same word by which we will be judged.

All these Scriptures sounds like God is serious about man understanding (and following) His instruction. Only a foolish man would charge that man cannot understand God's will. The charge is foolish because it is a reflection upon God to say He has communicated a plan of salvation which cannot be understood by mankind. My friend, you CAN understand God's word if you want to. God strongly urges and commands you to. Your eternal destiny depends upon you doing so (2 Tim. 2:15).

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THE BIBLE MEANS WHAT IT SAYS

Marvin L. Weir

One needs authority for what to do when worshipping God. Our authority does not come from the silence of the Scriptures. Neither do we follow Old Testament examples for our worship today.

The story is often told of the Bible class teacher who reads a verse of Scripture and someone asks, "What does it mean?" The teacher quickly replies, "It means what it says." This answer may not be suitable for every question that is raised, but it does cut to the heart of the matter regarding some verses of Scripture.

Most religious groups today teach that baptism is not necessary for one to become a child of God. The question asked on Pentecost was easily understood and so was the answer. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38). What does Acts 2:38 mean? It means what it says. Baptism is required for one to have remission of his sins.

Jesus said to the apostles, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). This verse clearly states that the Gospel requires one to be baptized in order to be saved. It means what it says!

Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Is it not easily understood that baptism is necessary in order to wash away one's sins? The verse means exactly what it says.

Another popular false doctrine today is that a child of God cannot sin so as to be lost. Many folks believe in the "once saved, always saved" dogma in spite of what the word of God clearly states. Paul said to the Galatians

who had obeyed the Gospel, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). How can one "fall away" from grace if he were never saved?

Peter warns, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:20-22). What do these verses of Scripture mean? They mean exactly what they say. It is possible for a child of God to choose a life of sin and fall from the grace of God after they have obeyed the Gospel.

Another popular false doctrine today is that one is saved by "faith only." The Bible teaches, however, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). To make sure there is no misunderstanding the Holy Spirit continues in saying "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). These verses mean exactly what they say – one cannot be saved by **faith only**.

Can one who desires to go to Heaven really attend the church of his choice? Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). This verse means what it says. Christ promised to build **His** church (singular). The apostle Paul teaches that there is only

"one body" (Eph. 4:4) and that God "...hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). These verses mean exactly what they say. There is only **one body** over which Christ is **head** and it is **the church** that He built!

What does it mean to "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33)? What does it mean when it says, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together" (Heb. 10:25)? What does it mean to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37)?

Does the Bible mean what it says when it commands Christians to sing songs of praise to God? "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). One needs authority for what to do when worshipping God. Our authority does not come from the silence of the Scriptures. Neither do we follow Old Testament examples for our worship today. Read the Scriptures: Matt. 26:30, Mark 14:26, 1 Cor. 14:15, Heb. 2:12, James 5:13. God commands the child of God to **sing** – not make music! The command to sing is specific and not generic. Neither the apostles nor the early church used instruments of music in their worship to God, and neither should we.

Can the Bible be understood? Yes! And yes, the Bible always means what it says!

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The Whole Of Scripture...

(Continued from page 89)

now saves us?” Before you ignore, dismiss, or reject the words of Peter, ask yourself this question. When Peter said that “baptism doth also now save us,” what was he saying baptism saves us from? The context shows that just as the water saved Noah from the wrath of God against a sinful world, so also baptism saves us from God’s wrath. The KIND of faith that saves is the KIND of faith that INCLUDES baptism. If not, why not?

A further examination of what baptism accomplishes should prove to any honest soul that a man is not saved from his past sins until he is immersed into that watery grave “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Please take a close look at Romans 6:3-6. When a person is baptized he enters “into Christ” (v.3), he enters into the “death” of Christ (v.3), he is “buried into death” (v.4), we are “raised to walk in newness of life” (v.4), and the “body of sin might be destroyed” (v.6).

If men would put aside their bias and human opinions and make an

honest effort to study and apply some of the fundamental principles of interpretation, much of the division could be resolved. Unfortunately, false teaching will always exist, and error will continue to take its toll upon the religious world. Peter has warned us, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”* (2 Peter 2:1). Jesus warned us to *“beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves”* (Matt. 7:15). Such errorists will always exist. Hence the ever increasing need to not only study, but to “handle aright” the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). The American Standard Version of 1901 has this interesting foot note on this passage. It reads, “holding a straight course in the word of truth.” The only safe course to follow is to take the sum of God’s word. Anything else is wrought with danger and destruction.

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WHAT IS FAITH?

David B. Smith

No small number of false religious concepts can be traced to some basic misunderstanding or disregard for the true nature of “faith.” Many believe that faith is “blind” or that faith should be perceived as a “leap in the dark.” Of course, this is formulated upon another basic misunderstanding — that the Bible cannot be understood alike by all men. As a result, people are regularly guilty of defining faith as simply that which they believe (regardless of whether that item is Biblically true or false). But, faith is not “blind” and no step made on the basis of faith is a “leap in the dark.”

The Sacred Text is clear that Biblical faith is derived on the basis of the word of God (Rom. 10:17). And, coupled with other passages (e.g., John 8:32; 1 Thess. 5:21), evidence, discernment and knowledge are all fundamental components of faith. No man can have faith without first having evidence of what is true, but, man must also exercise his own mental faculties and make the correct discernment from the available evidence and then act accordingly. Hence, one cannot have Biblical faith in something that the Bible does not teach or authorize.

And, still, faith is manifested by the appropriate response to the Word of God (James 2:14-26). “Work” or “obedience” is essentially connected to faith, since James writes of demons to show that some do possess inadequate belief, but that such is not real faith (James 2:19). Obviously, faith alone cannot save (James 2:24). After all, who could profess faith in what God has said without performing what God has required? So, faith is more than “belief.” It is based upon the word of God, involves discernment and the acceptance of the evidence, is the firm conviction of what is true, and manifests itself in the appropriate response to what the Bible says is true.

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Anonymous	\$35
Beginning Balance	\$ 3,615.87
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"Thanks so much and keep up the good work. The big Woodbury congregation promoted "Easter Worship." Their bulletin says, "Sunday, Easter Sunday as it has become known — truly a remarkable day in the history of the world — the Lord Jesus came forth from the grave — alive forever, the Savior for all mankind! So, I'm looking forward to

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