



# 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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## IS IT A MATTER OF FAITH OR OPINION?

*Vernon Clark Joines (1926-2013)*

***Those who adopt the practice of using instrumental music are guided by the wisdom of man and not by the wisdom of God. They openly violate the plain and positive requirement of the Lord that His followers are to walk by “faith” and not by “opinion.”***

As the children of God, the Scriptures teach that *“we walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Cor. 5:7). That means we live by a “thus saith the Lord,” not opinion. In order to settle this matter we can ask and answer two questions, and when they’re properly answered, they will distinguish between the two.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WALK BY FAITH?

In Romans 10:17, Paul declares: *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* So, if there is no message nor word from God, there can be no faith. If the inspired word of God does not specify a given course, there can be no faith to follow for *faith comes by hearing the word of God*. Therefore, if we pursue any course that is not outlined by God in the Scripture, we cannot walk with God, nor by faith. But when God speaks, we MUST do precisely and fully all that He says.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WALK BY OPINION?

The next logical question is: How does one walk by opinion? Let’s use John 3:1-2, even though many other Scriptures could be used to illustrate

the answer. Nicodemus came to Jesus by *night*. But, WHY did he come by night? To those of us who believe the Bible, it is obvious that we are not told WHY he came by night. Why didn’t he come by day? I suppose we could easily find an answer to this question by asking some of the theologians who would attempt to follow their own guidance in the matter. Such human opinion would signify WHAT ONE THINKS, and in religious matters, it means what men think (opinion) when the Bible does not answer the question to their satisfaction.

The preceding was written in order to establish a principle to determine when a thing or practice is scriptural or unscriptural. A matter can be scriptural, unscriptural or anti-scriptural. Is instrumental music, when used in the worship service of the saints, a scriptural worship? In other words, is it scriptural and correct (authorized) for Christians to use mechanical instruments of music when they assemble for worship? This question is very basic, and should be studied by all religious people everywhere, especially by members of the Lord’s church.

The following scriptures assuredly authorize singing: Matthew

26:30, Mark 14:26, Acts 16:25, Romans 15:9, Ephesians 5:19, 1 Corinthians 14:15, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 2:12 and Hebrews 13:15. From these passages we can be absolutely sure that singing is right and cannot be wrong. These verses are the extent of the (1) commandments, (2) inspired examples and (3) necessary inferences in the New Testament on how to praise God in song. That is the limit of His instruction; therefore, that becomes the absolute limit of our obedience as well. We are warned against adding to the word of God (Prov. 30:6). The absence of any additional instruction speaks loud and clear, for neither God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, no apostle nor any inspired writer ever uttered a single word about using an instrument of music in the worship of the church. Neither is there a record of a New Testament church ever using one.

This being true, it would have to be brought into the worship of the church by the command or tradition (opinion) of men (Mark 7:7-9). We must hear God and Christ, not man (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-2). Cain’s offer-

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**Faith or Opinion?...**



Editorial...

## FINDING GRACE TO HELP #3

Garland M. Robinson

Genesis 6 tells us of a time when the world had become so corrupt that... *“God saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”*

Notice the statement in verse 8, *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* Among all the people on the face of the earth, Noah was found to be in God’s favor. He was certainly in need of it. Every creature on the face of the earth was going to be destroyed. In the darkest of times, one man stood out above the rest. His name was Noah. Noah obtained mercy and found grace to help in time of need. All humanity since that time exists because of Noah. We all trace our roots back to him.

### OUR BLESSED LORD

Jesus the Christ, the divine and holy Son of God, is our great high priest (Heb. 4:14). He is a merciful and faithful high priest in order that He might bring about our reconciliation (cf. Heb. 2:17). He overcame death, becoming the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Cor. 15:20), ascended into heaven and sat down on the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3). He had tasted of every temptation (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, 1 John 2:16) and was without sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). He passed through every sorrow. He knows. He cares. He has compassion, sympathy and understanding because he suffered too.

From His throne comes grace, mercy and peace to all who come to

Him in faith and obedience. Being justified by faith, we can approach God our heavenly Father with full assurance knowing that if we ask anything according to His will he hears us. *“And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him”* (1 John 5:15). The Lord said, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him”* (Matt. 7:7-11)?

We can approach the throne with confidence because we’re privileged as his children. *“So that we may boldly say, The Lord [is] my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Heb. 13:6). We are encouraged in our trials and afflictions. We can pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) knowing that our supplications will be heard. Paul wrote, *“Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:6-7). The fact that we belong to Christ means He will always be there for us. But those without Christ cannot make that claim. The Lord stands against those who do evil (Psa. 34:16; 1 Peter 3:12).

We may often have times in our life that are so difficult that we don’t know how to put our feelings into words. We pray and cry out to God, but we’re at a loss for words. We groan in spirit with anguish, misery and grief. Even in these times, God knows,

He cares, He understands, He helps (cf. Rom. 8:26). We are safe in His keeping. First John 3:20 says, *“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”* Hebrews 13:5 tells us to live our life *“...without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”*

Notice these comforting verses from the 107th Psalm. *“O give thanks unto the LORD, for [he is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. ... Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, [and] he delivered them out of their distresses. ... For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. ... Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, [and] he saved them out of their distresses. ... He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered [them] from their destructions. ... He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.”*

To the lost and erring, the words of Isaiah 55:6-7 are appropriate, *“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”* (Isa. 55:6-7).

Is your heart and life right with God? Do you have the confidence in knowing your prayers are heard? You can obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need if you will obey God. Through **faith** (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), **repentance** (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), **confession** (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37), and **water baptism** (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21), you can be saved from your sins. You can live a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4). You can be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 5:9).

Don’t you want the help of God? Don’t you need His grace and mercy? Obey Him today.

FAITH and OBEDIENCE is the key to having your sins washed away in the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Acts 22:16). Believing alone won’t do it (James 2:17,24,26). Obedience alone won’t do it. It takes both FAITH and OBEDIENCE. The world won’t accept it, but the world has always been wrong. Obey the Gospel before it’s too late.

## Faith or Opinion?...

(Continued from page 33)

ing was rejected because there was no commandment to offer the fruit of the ground (Gen. 4:5). Nadab and Abihu died because they ignored God's commandments and offered "strange fire" (Lev. 10:1-3) instead of the fire God authorized to be taken from the altar (cf. Lev. 6:12-13; 6:12; Num. 16:46). They acted in service to God by doing that which God had not commanded. No worship to God is acceptable unless it is authorized by God in his inspired word!

The users of instrumental music in the worship assembly of the saints ignore God and make their worship vain (Matt. 15:7-9). Since the Bible is the complete and final message authorized by God, our obedience can only be to him (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). "*Sing and make melody in your heart*" is a very specific command for a specific kind of music. This automatically excludes the use of any other kind.

### THE LAW OF UNITY

The law of unity must be discussed to some degree at this time. The law of unity is expressed in 1 Corinthians 1:10 "...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." This verse is strengthened and supported by many other passages, such as Romans 15:5, Philippians 1:27, Ephesians 4:4-6, John 17:20, 2 John 9-10 and Romans 16:17. The scripture says that God hates six things, even seven are an abomination to him. The last of these is "...he that soweth, discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19).

In order to avoid division in the body of Christ, all things done by men must be done by the authority of Christ, that is, in his name. We can sing in the name of Christ in worship services (1 Cor. 14:15; Col. 3:16-17), but since the Lord has neither command, precept nor inspired example in his word for the use of instruments of music, they cannot be practiced without division and sin.

### EXAMPLE OF ITS USE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Let us look very briefly at some

examples of its use and some of its consequences when used in the Lord's church. The time was about 1860. The place was at a very small church building in Midway, Kentucky. The preacher was Dr. L. L. Pinkerton. Some of the expressions that were used following the introduction of the little mechanical instrument were: "...almost caused a rift" and "a spirited controversy," but it later led to a division among the members of the church. Today, the little melodeon is housed in a library room at the Kentucky Female Orphan School. I visited the town of Midway and the school many years ago while preaching in a meeting at Frankfort, Kentucky, and viewed the small instrument. According to reliable information, there were at least three of these instruments, since some of them did not survive the fury of some of the faithful members during this time.

I cite one additional example of what took place in Thorp Spring, Texas where a Bible school was located. When an instrument was introduced into worship services, a father was set against his two sons and they against their father. The father stayed with the truth, and his sons went with error. The father later wrote about some of the results of the division, "...the affair spread rapidly to the churches, raising local tensions, crystallizing personal opinions, and splitting congregations," and it has been truthfully said, "when God finishes what he has to say on any subject we must accept that and cease action."

We dare not teach nor do more. There is an established principle of divine worship. We can only do in worship that for which we have apostolic command. If there is no commandment for it, it is barred. Everything as an element of divine worship is barred that is not commanded. We must respect God and his word enough to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. We believe this to be a scriptural plea because 1 Peter 4:11 admonishes us to "*speak as the oracles of God.*"

**God commands us to SING and make melody in our heart.** This is the act God commands. If you play an instrument, that is another act separate and apart from singing. God has specified that we sing and

that the melody be made in the heart (Eph. 5:19).

Does instrumental music really aid the singing? Considering the purpose of singing as expressed in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, it cannot, for the chief purpose of singing is for teaching and exhorting one another. Instrumental music cannot aid the voice in expression of thought, either for good or bad.

Let me make a short statement about the Greek word "*psallo*." Some have said and continue to say that it includes an instrument of music. But the Greek authorities are very clear. (I speak of the great scholars in the Greek language.) They are very clear that this word had evolved by New Testament times to refer only to singing. The instrument is the heart (Eph. 5:19). That understanding is supported by the fact that our standard English translations of the Bible render the *psallo* as singing or making melody in the heart.

I ask all who are using human practices in worship to God to lay them aside. All need to realize that unscriptural objects used in worship are just as sinful as teaching false doctrine. Faithful Christians should in no way be associated with those who use sinful practices or teach false doctrine. This makes the instrument a test of fellowship by the individuals who introduce it and use it. The history of the mechanical instrument has been one of division and bad feelings of the brethren toward one another. God's promise to receive us is based on our decision to separate ourselves from those who practice sin (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6).

Finally, one thing is incontrovertibly settled: those who adopt the practice of using instrumental music are, to that extent, guided by the wisdom of man and not by the wisdom of God. They openly violate the plain and positive requirement of the Lord that His followers shall walk by faith and not by opinion.

NOTE: I was honored with the opportunity of knowing brother Joines and conducting his funeral. He was a prince of preachers who knew the Bible inside and out, through and through. If you had a Bible question, he had the answer and would quote it to you. He being dead, yet speaketh. — *Editor*

# Elder's COLUMN

## POSTMODERN THOUGHT #5 SECULARISM

Victor M. Eskew

*Secularism rejects all forms of religious faith and worship.*

In our previous articles, we examined three foundational elements of postmodern thought: *Pluralism*, *Relative truth*, and *Tolerance*. Understanding these concepts helps to understand what is transpiring in our society today. We know things are not like they used to be. We ask ourselves: “What has happened?” The answer lies in a system of thought that has invaded not only the United States and the world; but has made great strides and inroads into the Lord’s church.

In this article, we want to look at the fourth platform of postmodern thought. This element is called *Secularism*. Secularism rejects all forms of religious faith and worship. This element of postmodern thought started to be pushed in the 1960s. It has gradually grown through the years and has had great influence on practically every aspect of our society: our government, our schools, our workplaces, our churches, and our homes.

Secularism biggest cry is: “There must be a separation between church and state.” Some individuals would have us to believe this statement is found in the United States Constitution, even though it is not. This cry has enabled atheists and other anti-religious people to remove God, Jesus Christ, and the Word of God from so many parts of our society.

The list of attacks on religion by secularists is very, very long. The following is but a partial list of things that have taken place and are continuing to change this nation.

1. Prayer is not allowed in most schools.
2. Bible reading is not allowed in most schools.
3. The Ten Commandments have been removed from many public places.
4. Crosses have been removed from many public places.
5. Christmas programs are not allowed in many schools.

6. Manger scenes are not allowed in many public places.

7. Individuals want “In God We Trust” removed from our money.

8. Individuals want to remove “one nation under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance.

9. Chaplains in the military have been restricted as to what they can say (example: prayers “in Jesus’ name” are forbidden).

10. In some places, the government has attempted to monitor the sermons that ministers deliver so no so-called “hate speech” will occur.

People try to deny it, but Christianity is under attack because of postmodern thinking. For the time at least, Christianity is still allowed in our homes and church buildings. Everywhere else, postmodern thinkers are seeking to eliminate it. If they ultimately have their way, they will remove Biblical teaching and morality from every religious gathering! That’s where it’s headed.

In this discussion, there needs to be some understanding of the phrase, “separation of church and state.” It is not a phrase that is found in the United States Constitution. It comes from a letter Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Baptists who lived in Danbury, Connecticut after Mr. Jefferson became the third President of the United States. In the letter, he declared that there is “a wall of separation between church and state” to prevent government interference with religious activities. Two things are very important to know about Jefferson’s letter. One, his letter is not the law of the land. Two, he understood the First Amendment and was assuring those in Danbury that the Amendment would be followed.

Another aspect of this discussion that needs to be understood is the First Amendment of the Constitution. It opens with these words: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting

the free exercise thereof...” Two things about religion are noted in this Amendment. First, the government of the U.S. cannot establish a national religion of any kind. Second, Congress cannot interfere with the free practice of a religious group. The prohibitions of the First Amendment are placed squarely upon the government. They have nothing to do with the government forbidding all aspects of Christianity from public places and from things that are controlled by the government.

A final point that needs to be deeply understood, especially by Christians, is that government is a God-given institution. Paul wrote: “...the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). Pilate was reminded by Jesus Himself that “*thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above...*” (John 19:11). According to the psalmist, God is “*the governor among the nations*” (Psa. 22:28). With this understanding, it is foolish to think that God has no interest in religion. It is a false belief that the church should keep as far away from government as it possibly can. If the government is separated from the church, then the government is separated from the truth because the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). This is precisely why the United States finds itself in its present condition. The government has become secular. It is opposed to religion in general. It stands in opposition to the truth of God’s Word. The church has retreated because of the supposed “separation of church and state.” Thus, our nation promotes and protects such things as abortion, adultery, homosexuality, gambling, lying, corruption, poor work ethics, waste, and those who violate the laws of our land.

The only thing that will bring our nation back to God is an understanding and practice of God’s holy Word.

Under the Old Covenant, the king was required to have a copy of God’s law and follow it at all times. “*And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them*” (Deut. 17:18-19). If the king was to follow the Old Law which was inferior to the New Covenant, why shouldn’t rulers be required to adhere to the teachings of a superior covenant, the New Testament of Jesus Christ?

“Get God out!” This is the cry of secularism. “Separation of church and state” has been the means whereby secularists have attempted to accomplish this goal. They have been extremely successful. Sadly, even Christians have accepted this concept — hook, line, and sinker. Our nation has drifted far from God and His holy Word. It will continue to do so as long as secularism is accepted by the people.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

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# CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM #5: PARADISE

Adam Good

***Islam’s Paradise is a sensual, hedonistic realm of carnal pleasures designed for men. Islam reduces men to beasts and women to objects to be used for their gratification.***

What happens after death according to the Bible and the Qur’an? Both religions believe in places of reward and punishment following a Day of Judgment. However, the descriptions of these realms differ so significantly that the God of the Bible and the god of the Qur’an (Islam) cannot possibly be the same being.

The Islamic place of reward is referred to as *Paradise* (the Garden). It is described like an oasis. “Rivers of water” flow “incorruptible.” Believers will enjoy “rivers of milk of which the taste never changes,” “rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink,” and “rivers of honey, pure and clear” (Surah 47:15). Every kind of fruit and meat will be available in abundance (Surah 2:25; 52:22; 56:20-21). Allah will instruct the righteous: “enter ye the Garden, ye and your wives, in (beauty and) rejoicing” (Surah 43:70). They will “be in groves of (cool) shade, reclining on Thrones” that are “encrusted (with gold and precious stones)” (Surah 33:56; 56:15). In this “eternal home,” the righteous enjoy “perpetual” “shades, cool and ever deepening” (Surah 13:35; 4:57). Shade is provided by trees so enormous that “a rider can travel for a hundred years” without leaving their shelter (Muslim 2826). “Sustenance” will be served “morning and evening” by male “youths of perpetual (freshness)” on “dishes and goblets of gold; there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that their eyes could delight in...an abundance of fruit” (Surah 19:72; 43:70-73). Those in the Garden “will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade” (Surah 18:31; Surah 33:33-35). Muhammad promised “you will have in [Paradise] whatever is de-

sired by your soul and pleasing to your eye.” To illustrate, those who loved horses on the earth will be given “a horse of rubies that will fly” them wherever they wish (Tirmidhi 2543). Believers are promised they will “remain young and never grow old, ... always live in affluent circumstances and never become destitute” (Muslim 2837).

Islam’s Paradise is a sensual, hedonistic realm of carnal pleasures designed for men. Every man who enters Paradise “shall have two wives, each wife wearing seventy bracelets” (Tirmidhi 2535). Additionally, Allah will reward the men with at least seventy beautiful, virginal companions called *houris* (Surah 37:48-49; 44:51-54; 52:70-77; 56:22-23, 35-38). These specially created women will be sequestered and “restrained in pavilions,” much like harems on earth (Surah 55:72). To house their dozens of wives, Muhammad promised “in Paradise there would be for a believer a tent of a single hollowed pearl the breadth of which would be sixty miles” (Muslim 2838). Should “the believer” desire “a child in Paradise,” he [only sons apparently] shall be carried (in pregnancy), born, and complete his aging in an hour” (Tirmidhi 2563). In order to fully enjoy Allah’s blessings, men “shall be given in paradise such and such strength in [physical relations] ...he will be given the strength of a hundred [men]” (Tirmidhi 2536). Muslim commentators are graphic and obscene in their descriptions of the activities perpetually taking place in Paradise. Islam reduces men to beasts and women to objects to be used for their gratification.

What must a person do in order to receive Paradise? “Give glad tidings,” Surah 2:25 reads, “to those who believe and work righteousness that

their portion is Gardens.” Belief and deeds of righteousness is a common expression (Surah 4:57; 22:14, 23; 29:7). “Those whose lives the angels take in a state of purity” will be allowed to enter “the Garden, because of (the good) which ye did (in the world)” (Surah 16:31-32). Surah 32:19 cites belief, righteous deeds, and good deeds while Surah 45:15 explains “If any one does a righteous deed, it ensures to the benefit of his own soul; if he does evil, it works against (his own soul). In the end will ye (all) be brought back to your Lord” (Surah 45:15). A person’s good deeds will be weighted and if the balance is “heavy” they will enter the Garden (Surah 23:102-103). “Paradise” will be the home of those who pray humbly, “avoid vain talk,” are “active in deeds of charity,” “abstain from [relations] except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hand possess, for (in their case) they are free from blame,” and those who honor “their trusts and their covenants” Surah 23:1-11). Men are more likely to be in Paradise than women. When Muhammad “looked into the (Hell Fire), he “found that the

majority of its dwellers were women” (Bukhari 6449).

Paradise is only for those who follow Islam. “Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam...if any deny the Signs of Allah [the *Qur’an*], Allah is swift in calling to account” (Surah 3:19). Surah 3:85 promises “Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers” (Surah 3:85). Christians are described as lacking “faith” in Allah and as “perverted transgressors” (Surah 3:110). Whoever among “the community of...Christians hears about me [Muhammad], but does not affirm his belief in that which I have been sent [the *Qur’an*] and dies in this state (of disbelief), he shall be but one of the denizens of Hell-Fire” (Muslim 153). Surah 48:13 declares “If any believe not in Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad], We have prepared, for those who reject Allah, a Blazing Fire!” Surah 98:6 reinforces this teaching. “Those who disbelieve [Islam, Muhammad], among the People of the Book [Jews and Christians] and among the Polytheists, will be in Hell-Fire...they are the worst of crea-

tures.” The Hadith state “when it will be the Day of Resurrection Allah would deliver to every Muslim a Jew or a Christian and say: That is your rescue from Hell-Fire” (Muslim 2767). Muslims will enter Paradise while their surrogate Jew or Christian burns in their stead.

Islam presents Paradise as an eternal college frat party of the basest kind. Its rewards (water, wine, abundant food, luxury, wealth, tents, endless shade, beautiful women) appeal to the circumstances of 7th century A.D. Arabia. Muhammad promised all his male followers that they would be greater than sheiks in the next life.

To use the language of James, such teaching about the afterlife is “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15). No matter the apologists’ claims, Islam is clear that Christians will be consigned to Hell for not accepting Allah, Muhammad, and the *Qur’an* (Surah 9:63, 68).

Allah is certainly not the God of the Bible, even though they claim he is.

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## THE BIBLE IS NOT OPTIONAL

Marvin L. Weir

There are many great books authored by men. While these books contribute to man’s education, it is not mandatory that a person read and study all of them. One book, however, is unique from all others. It is the Holy Bible. It is this book that cannot be neglected without eternal consequences.

**The Bible Must be Read and Studied.** One will never benefit from the Holy Scriptures if he does not read them or have them read to him. The Lord indicted those of His day for not **knowing** or not **practicing** the demands of the Scriptures. When the Pharisees made false accusations against His disciples, Jesus said, “*Have ye not read what David did*” (Matt. 12:3) and “*Have ye not read in the law*” (Matt. 12:5)? When the chief priests and elders demanded “by what authority” Jesus did the things He did, the Lord said, “*Did ye never read*

*in the scriptures*” (Matt. 21:42)? It is easy to discern that Christ intended for people to read and study the Bible. And, God’s Word can be understood! The Scriptures admonish, “*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is*” (Eph. 5:17). It is true that people will be lost because of “*a lack of knowledge*” (Hosea 4:6).

**The Bible Must be Believed!** There are many who do not read the Bible. Something even more tragic, however, is the number of people who do read the Bible, but do not believe it. The reason is because of preconceived ideals, bias, prejudice, or simply not wanting to accept the truth. The Scriptures assert that “*faith (belief) cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom. 10:17). Only through the word of God is Biblical faith possible, and the Holy Word has been given to us to produce belief.

The apostle John recorded, “*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (John 20:30-31). It is true today even as the writer of Hebrews says, “*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it*” (Heb. 4:2).

**The Bible Must be Obeyed!** All mankind will either be lost in hell or saved in heaven, and the Bible is the book by which people will be judged. Christ warns, “*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 12:48).

Simply professing to love the Lord

while rejecting the words of Holy Writ will not save anyone. The Hebrews writer could not have been more clear when he said, “*And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*” (Heb. 5:9).

The Bible principle of **hearing** and **doing** is firmly established. James admonished his hearers, “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*” (James 1:22). The Lord Himself said, “*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him*” (John 14:21). Those who “*know not God*” and those who “*obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus*” (2 Thess. 1:8-9) will be eternally lost.

**The Bible Must be Lived!**

Many books written by men become popular because they give their approval to whatever it is that people enjoy doing. It matters not to one obsessed with the “best seller” list whether or not the advice is moral. The Bible, however, demands that people renounce sin and live the Christian life. It is as Titus said, “*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Titus 2:11-12). Paul clearly defines one’s duty in terms the world would rather not hear: “*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil*” (1 Thess. 5:21-22).

**The Bible is the Source of Authority!** The greatest need today is for people to “*learn not to go beyond*

*the things that are written*” (1 Cor. 4:6). We now have “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3) as “*the faith...was once for all delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3). As previously stressed, the words that Christ has spoken will judge all men (John 12:48).

May all of the Lord’s faithful be “*set for the defence of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:16). It is a matter of life and death, for error believed and obeyed will damn one’s soul (2 Thess. 2:11-12) while truth believed and obeyed will make one free from sin (John 8:32).

The Bible is not optional for one who desires to inherit eternal life. May such a person choose to drink deeply from the Holy Scriptures!

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## WANDERING IN AND OUT OF DENOMINATIONALISM

*Be faithful to Christ and his church and quit wandering in and out of denominationalism.*

**D**enominationalism is either right or wrong! Under the Old and New Testaments *idolatry* is wrong/sinful (Exodus 20:1-5; Gal. 5:19-21). Under both Testaments *adultery* is wrong/sinful (Exodus 20:14; Mark 10:11-12). When a person becomes a Christian, he is married to Christ (Eph. 5:25-27; Rev 21:2). Therefore to have an affair with denominationalism is to be a spiritual adulterer.

Denominationalism is wrong/sinful because it is division (1 Cor. 1:10-13). It teaches false doctrine (Gal. 1:6-10). Therefore, when Christians wonder in and out of the church and into denominationalism, they are engaging in spiritual adultery (James 4:4). What is their reasoning?

**“Oh, I like their music. They are so upbeat. Surely God will accept that!”** No! God will not accept that because he has authorized only congregational, a cappella, singing. Otherwise, it becomes an entertainment venue. “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*” (Eph. 5:19; cf. Col. 3:16).

**“Oh, they are so loving and kind.”** Apparently, so were those who Christ condemned in the Sermon on the Mount. “*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. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:21-23).

**“Oh, their preacher is so sincere.”** Nadab and Abihu were probably sincere when they “*offered strange fire before the Lord*” (Lev. 10:1). Cain may have been sincere when he offered the fruit of the ground for a sacrifice, but God rejected it (Gen. 4:1-5). Weigh truth on truth scales and sincerity on sincerity scales.

**Then there are, what I call “Love seat denominationalists.”** They sit on their love seat at home and are spoon fed false doctrine by syrupy televangelists who tells them “God wants you to prosper, God wants you to be happy” — while forsaking the assembly of the saints (Heb. 10:25). These “honey running from the mouth” preachers never tell you that you can be lost because of disobedience. Their message is buy my books, send me money and think positively and you will be saved. No! God wants you to be righteous.

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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"Thank you very much. I trust STOP and enjoy reading every one that comes in" ...**Bill Crocker. [EDITOR'S NOTE:** I appreciate your confidence in this work. It's good to have brethren in whom we can trust. But ultimately, we all trust the Lord and his powerful Word, the Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:16). Everything we hear and read must be examined and proved according to the Scriptures. When Paul preached in Berea, he commended the people there because they '*received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*' (Acts 17:11). We must do likewise. I know you understand that but thought it needed to be said for others who put their trust in men instead of God.]

"Is it proper to use 'thy kingdom come' when praying? Like, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth, and then continue on with your prayer? Thank you very much" ...**TN. [EDITOR'S NOTE:** The short answer is no. The kingdom, which is the church, has already come. It was established in 33AD on the day of Pentecost when the first Gospel sermon was preached. We read about it in Acts chapter two. When Jesus was teaching the apostles in Matthew 6:9-10, the kingdom had not yet been established. To pray for the kingdom to come was valid before the day of Pentecost. But afterward, it was not valid since the kingdom was present. Therefore, we cannot pray for it to come. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said he would build his 'church' and referred to it as the 'kingdom' in verse 19. In Mark 9:1, Jesus said that some who heard him teach would see the 'kingdom' before they died. That's exactly what occurred in Acts two (within a year or two from the time Jesus said it). Colossians 1:13 tells the saints at Colosse that when they obeyed the

"Please remove the church here from your mailing list. It is a wonderful paper. Keep up the good work. God bless" ...**TN.** "Please be advised that this address is not for the church. It was used as a temporary address while the affairs of the church were being handled. The

Gospel they had been delivered from the power of darkness, and had been translated into the 'kingdom' of God's dear Son. Since the kingdom has come, there is no way we can pray for it to come. It's already here. It is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. It is the church/kingdom of which our Lord Jesus is the savior (Eph. 5:23).]

Become a teacher "online" with *International Bible Teaching Ministries*. They have more than 5,000 students from 148 nations enrolled in their Bible correspondence course program. Of these, a few are Christians wanting to grow in knowledge. Others have embraced denominational error and are offended by truth. But most are simply seekers, looking for the way to heaven. IBTM also now has more than 100 teachers working in this study program — but we need more. The more teachers we have to teach, the more students we can reach. Our volunteer teachers grade lessons, answer questions and encourage their students to keep studying God's word, all by email. It is a work that requires patience, commitment and a love for lost souls. But occasionally it is also a work that gives our teachers the joy of knowing that someone they have never met face-to-face has 'put on Christ' as a result of their efforts. If this sounds like a work you want to be a part of, please let us know. [www.IBTMinistries.org](http://www.IBTMinistries.org) or [info@IBTMinistries.org](mailto:info@IBTMinistries.org)" ...**Ronald D. Gilbert, Director, Algood, TN. [NOTE: If you are willing to help teach others the Gospel, I encourage you to get involved with this program. Brother Gilbert is a faithful Gospel preacher. I heartily endorse this work. — Garland Robinson]**

*Seek The Old Paths* is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked "not for publication." The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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