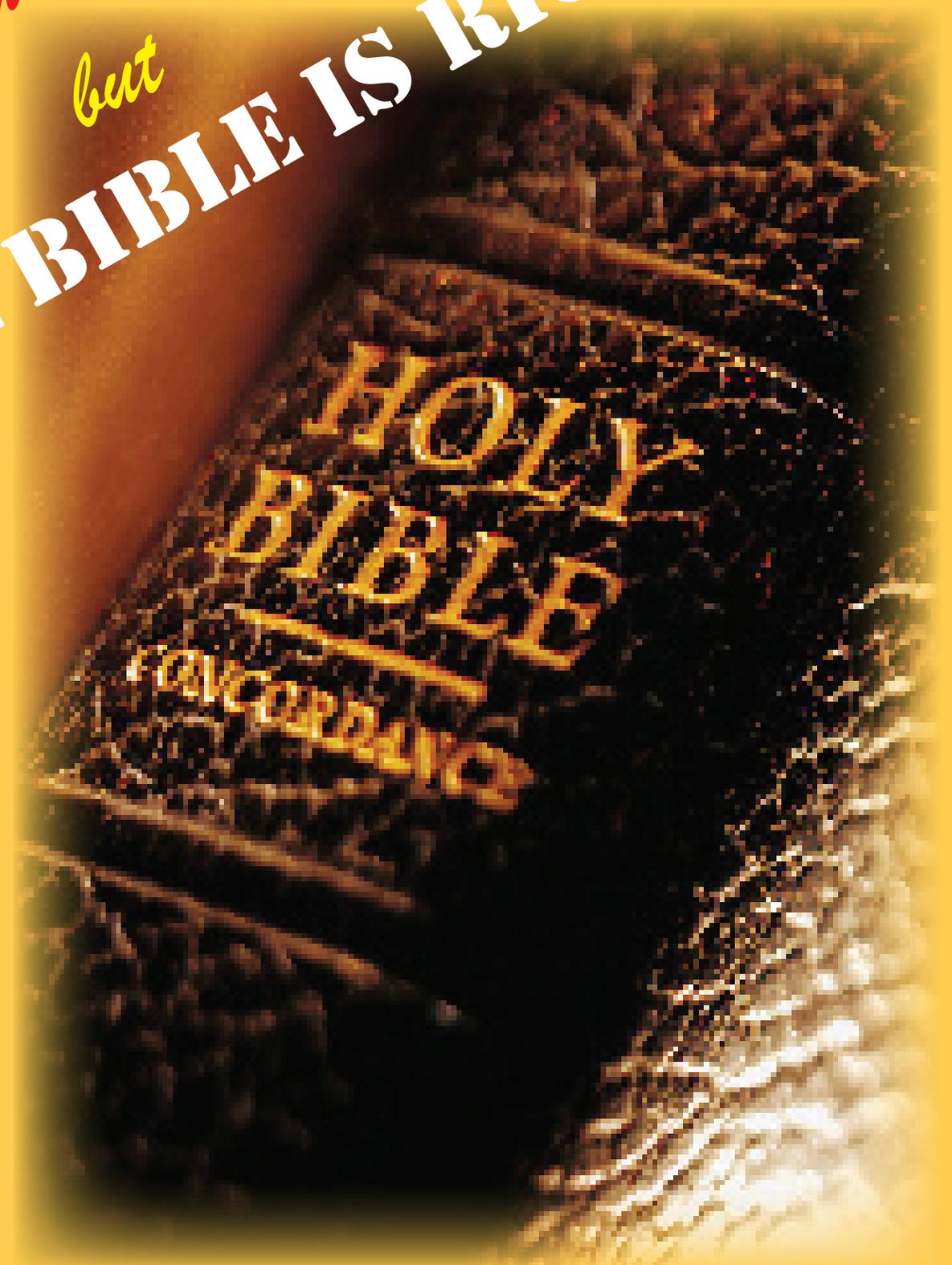


Something is Wrong ...

but

THE BIBLE IS RIGHT



We pray this booklet will aid your study
of the word of God,
“which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

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INTRODUCTION

Something Is Wrong ...

Common sense tells us that something is wrong in the religious world today. When two different answers are given for the same mathematical problem, common sense tells us that one or the other is wrong. Both “four” and “five” cannot be correct answers to the problem of “two plus two.” It is conceivable that both may be wrong, but one must be wrong. The same common sense should tell us that something is wrong in the religious world when we have so many contradictory answers to questions having to do with the welfare of the soul. There are over 250 different churches in the world today. [At the time of this edition, internet databases claim some 33,000 to 41,000 “denominations” throughout the world!] The answers they give are different, in many cases flatly contradicting one another.

Many are closing their eyes to differences, saying it makes no difference what one believes, just so one is sincere. Men will not accept such reasoning in any field other than religion. Is religion less important? Is it as well to believe falsehood as it is to believe truth? We beg men everywhere to exercise the good common sense with which God has blessed them.

Still others, receiving the differing answers, have thrown up their hands, despairing of knowing what is right. But we need not despair, for there is one unfailing place to which we can go, in the full assurance that we can find the answers—that place is the Bible.

... But the Bible Is Right

How blessed we are, in these days of confusion, to have the Bible! How fortunate we are we need not place our trust in the answers of men! **The Bible is right.**

The Bible is right because it is the word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). God’s word is as dependable as God himself. All should accept the answers of God as the right answers.

The Bible is right because God’s word is truth. “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Truth does not contradict itself. Men may give conflicting answers, but God does not. Because His word is truth, His answers are true. In fact, in the language of Hebrews 6:18, it is “impossible for God to lie.”

Not only does the Bible give the right answers, but it answers all questions we need to ask. Second Timothy 3:16-17 says: “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.” No man should want more than this.

The great need of today is more people who will take their Bibles in hand and let God give them the right answers.

—PART ONE—
THE BIBLE IS RIGHT ABOUT THE QUESTION OF SALVATION

Many answers are given in response to questions about salvation. Some say, “Only believe”; some, “Pray”; some, “You are already either saved or lost.” Somebody is wrong, but the Bible is right.

There is something you can do. To those accused of crucifying the Lord, Peter said, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). Peter could say this because man has a part to play in God’s plan of salvation for the lost. This plan can be said to have two parts: heaven’s part and man’s part. God devised this plan, and Christ fulfilled it, by giving His own life’s blood for the sins of the world. The Holy Spirit has revealed the gospel plan of salvation, which is recorded in the New Testament. This is heaven’s part. If man had no part, we would have no need for concern, for heaven’s part has been well done. If we are lost, the charge cannot be laid to the forces of heaven, but only upon ourselves. Man has a part, and that part is humbly to submit himself in obedience to the plan of God, as it is revealed in the New Testament.

FOUR ESSENTIALS TO SALVATION

As we search the scriptures for the answer to the question of salvation, we find there are four things that are essential to our being saved:

1. Faith is essential to salvation.

Jesus made faith a positive requirement when He gave the great commission, saying: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Again, we read, “But 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.” (Hebrews 11:6). These and many other similar passages make it clear one cannot be saved without believing in Christ as the Son of God and as the Savior.

But there are other important questions that need to be answered concerning faith.

How is faith obtained? Some say that faith comes in answer to prayer. Others say that faith is bestowed by miraculous power when one is converted. The Bible says, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). In order to have faith, we must hear what God has to say. This indicates the great necessity of studying and preaching the Bible.

Does “faith only” save? There is a great need for answering this question. Many of the differing religious bodies stand in agreement that “faith only” saves. Some have written into their creeds: “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.” But neither the agreement of the multitudes nor the statements of the creeds make “faith only” the right answer. The Bible says: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).

Here are two conflicting answers: “faith only” and “not by faith only.” Both cannot be right. The Bible answer of “not by faith only” is right. Again, we read: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19-20). These passages do not teach against “faith,” but against “faith only.” We must not be guilty of taking the “do” out of the religion of Jesus Christ.

2. Repentance is essential to salvation.

Jesus said: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He charged the apostles “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). On the day of Pentecost, we find Peter honoring this charge, as he commands: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). It is evident, then, that one must not only believe, but one must also repent.

3. Confession is essential to salvation.

Jesus said: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32, 33). It is possible for one to believe in Christ, yet fail to confess Him. “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue” (John 12:42). Here are some who believed on Christ. The Bible says they did. Yet, they would not confess Him. From this, one may see that more is necessary than “just believe.” The one who believes must repent and confess his faith in Christ as the Son of God. In Romans 10:9-10, Paul said: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Different religious bodies require different kinds of confessions. Some require a confession of sins be made in the ear of a “priest,” while others require a confession of sinlessness by asking, “Do you believe that God, for Christ’s sake, has pardoned your sins?” Such confessions are without Bible authority. The Bible confession is a simple confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God. It was upon such a confession that Philip baptized the eunuch. After hearing the gospel, the eunuch said: “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:36-38).

4. Baptism is essential to salvation.

With one voice, all who advocate the doctrine of “faith only,” in opposition to the Bible doctrine of “not by faith only,” say that baptism is not essential. Just why anyone should want to make a commandment of the Lord non-essential is difficult to understand. If one can be saved without being baptized, then, baptism is certainly not essential. But what does the Bible say?

In giving the great commission, Jesus said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Who is the “he” that shall be saved? Jesus says it is he that “believeth and is baptized.” It is not belief minus baptism, but belief plus baptism. God has joined belief and baptism together, but some would put them asunder. Peter states, in the plainest of language, that baptism is for the remission of sins: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Ananias told Saul: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

A great many preachers today will not baptize a person “for the remission of sins.” Did Peter teach error on the day of Pentecost? Did Ananias misinstruct Saul? We can do no better than give the same instructions. We must not cut God’s plan short. Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all essential to salvation.

SALVATION “IN CHRIST”

1. How does one get in Christ?

We may think of the four essentials to salvation we have just considered as four necessary steps that place the lost in Christ. Faith, repentance, and confession are progressive and necessary steps; but these alone leave the sinner outside of Christ. The Bible teaches that baptism is the final step “into Christ”: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). Romans 6:3 also teaches this fact: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” When one is baptized into Christ, one enters a sacred relationship that calls for newness of life: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

2. What does it mean to be “in Christ”?

We may see the importance of being “in Christ,” when we consider what being “in Christ” means.

In Christ we have all spiritual blessings: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

In Christ we are new creatures: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In Christ we have redemption: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14).

In Christ we are reconciled to God: “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

What more could one ask than all these things? But, remember, the Bible teaches that baptism is “into Christ.”

SALVATION IN EXAMPLE

One of the best ways to learn what to do in order to be saved is to consider the God-given examples in the book of Acts. Just before His ascension into heaven, Jesus gave the great commission: “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). The book of Acts is an inspired account of carrying out that commission. Beginning in Jerusalem, according to instruction (Luke 24:46-47), the apostles began to preach the gospel, in order that lost sinners might be saved. God has seen fit to supply us with several examples of the plan of salvation in operation. By examining these cases of conversion, we can find out exactly what was done by them, in order to be saved. For the convenience of the reader, we have arranged these examples on the chart that appears in the center of this booklet.

Please investigate the chart and read the inspired accounts from your Bible. Upon investigation, one will see that the preaching of the gospel preceded each case of conversion. Preaching was necessary in order to produce faith (Romans 10:17). One also may note that every case culminated with the baptism of the person, or persons. It is not specifically stated that each person believed, repented, and confessed; but we know the apostles, inspired of God, would not baptize one who did not believe, who was not repentant, and who would not confess Christ. The fact the “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) assures us we can be saved by following the same plan. When what is indicated concerning each case of conversion is compiled, we again must be impressed with the four essential steps: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.

SALVATION AND OBEDIENCE

No matter how many say, “You need not do anything,” the Bible teaches plainly that we must “do.” Jesus said, “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” (Matthew 7:21). We read in Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14). Obedience marks the time when we are made free from our sins. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18).

The inspired author asks the question in 1 Peter 4:17: “What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” Are you willing to accept the Bible answer for this important question? Hear it! “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

God will not save you in disobedience. Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9).

If you understand what you must do in order to be saved, do it at once. In the cases of conversion we have in the Bible, the Pentecostians who “gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:41). The eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). The Philippian jailor obeyed the same hour of the night: “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway” (Acts 16:33).

—PART TWO—
THE BIBLE IS RIGHT ABOUT THE CHURCH
What connection is there
between the church and salvation?

Many contend the church has nothing to do with salvation. We hear much talk about “unsaved church members” and “saved non-church members.” Some questions are in order, and again, we must let the Bible supply the answers.

1. Does the church save?

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the One who saves: “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). No, the church does not save.

2. Can one be saved outside the church?

The Bible teaches that all the saved are in the church, for the Lord adds to the church such as should be saved: “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Since the Lord adds to the church such as should be saved, we must conclude that there are no saved outside the church. People who should be saved from their sins are those who will gladly receive God’s word and obey it, as did the Pentecostians.

What did these people do to become members of the church? Beginning in Acts 2:14, we find Peter preaching the gospel of Christ. Notice the reaction of the people: “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. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:37-41). Peter told these people what to do in order to have the remission of their sins. They that gladly received his word were baptized and added to the church (Acts 2:47).

Membership in the church of the Lord is not a matter of popular vote on who shall be a member of the Lord’s church. The Lord takes care of this matter Himself, and He makes no mistakes. He adds all that should be saved and adds no one who is not saved. Yes, one must be a member of the church in order to be saved. A clear concept of what the church is will make this fact apparent.

The church is the body of Christ, and He is the Savior of the body. The Bible teaches that the church is the body: “And he is the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). Ephesians 1:22-23 speaks of “the church, which is his body.” But, in Ephesians 5:23, we find that “He is the savior of the body.” The church, then, is that body which Christ proposes to save. We need to be members of it in order to be saved.

The church is the house of God. First Timothy 3:15 speaks of “the house of God, which is the church of the living God.” The saved are the children of God; and all God’s children are, surely, members of God’s house, or family. But God’s house is the church. Therefore, we conclude that all God’s children are members of the church.

Those who think the church is unimportant and unnecessary should remember that “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). In Acts 20:28, we hear Paul speak of the church “which He purchased with His own blood.” The precious blood of our Lord is vested in the church. Let no one think He paid such a price for an unnecessary, unimportant institution. **You need to be a member of that blood-bought body in order to be saved.**

WHICH CHURCH?

Of which church should I become a member?

This is an often-asked question today. The great number of different churches presents a confusing and deplorable situation. Some people advise, “Join the church of your choice,” as though it makes no difference which is chosen. The differences that exist between the various churches are undeniable proof that some are wrong. When one contradicts the other, one must be wrong. Right-thinking people will desire to be members of the right church. Which is right?

1. The right church is the one you read about in your Bible.

Your Bible speaks of only one church. A multiplicity of churches from which to choose is completely foreign to the language of the Bible. Christ promised to build only one church, saying, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Christ did not promise to build “churches” (plural), but “My church” (singular). True to His promise, Christ built only one church (Acts 2). Christ purchased only one church: “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). Christ did not promise, build, or purchase a plurality of churches.

In order to justify the great number of different churches in the world today, some have pointed to the fact that the Bible speaks of churches (plural). This is true. We read of “the churches of Galatia” (1 Corinthians 16:1). We also read of “the church at Ephesus” (Revelation 2:1), “the church in Smyrna” (Revelation 2:8), etc. But these were not different kinds of churches. They did not present a choice of different names and different doctrines. They differed only in location. These were only congregations of “the church.”

Various figures by which the church is identified in the Bible indicate the church’s undenominational character. For instance, as you have seen already, the church is called “the house of God” (1 Timothy 3:15). This pictures the church as God’s family, but none of us would think of saying that God has many families. The church is called the “body” (Ephesians 1:22, 23), but the same letter asserts, “There is one body” (Ephesians 4:4). The picture drawn for us by inspiration, in Ephesians 5:25-27, is of a bride that Christ has sanctified and cleansed, “that He might present it unto Himself.” Who is willing to charge the Lord with polygamy? There is one bride, one body, and one family.

These things are right because the Bible presents them, and no person who loves the Bible will deny them. The right church of which to be a member is the one you read about in your Bible. Any church about which you cannot read in your Bible is not the right church.

2. The right church is the one that has the right beginning.

The church Christ promised to build had its beginning in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection (Acts 2). From that day forward, the Bible speaks of the church as being in existence (Acts 2:47; 20:28). All this was according to plan. Hundreds of years before, Isaiah had prophesied: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2-3). Jesus had instructed the apostles “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

Any church which had its beginning at some other place or time cannot be the right church.

3. The right church is the one that wears the right name.

The church is the bride of Christ, and it is fitting and proper that the bride should wear the name of the husband. Christ is the head of the body, and it is right for the body to wear the name of the head. Christ said, "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). Therefore, it is His and should wear the name of its owner.

In Romans 16:16, we read: "The churches of Christ salute you." There are other scriptural names, such as "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2), but these do not in any sense rob Christ of the honor and respect due Him in His church. Names mean something. They help designate and identify. If you cannot find the name of a given church in the Bible, it is good evidence that it is not the right church.

4. The right church is the one that recognizes the right authority.

God has given Christ absolute authority over the church you read about in your Bible. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22). His law is the law of the New Testament, of which He is the mediator (Hebrews 9:15). Human wisdom has no place in devising laws for Christ's church. Hear this warning from Paul: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:8-10).

But many do not believe we are complete in Christ; thus, they have exalted human wisdom by their traditions, through creeds, church manuals, disciplines, etc. Not only do these deny the completeness of Christ but, many times, introduce that which is contrary to the law of Christ. Any church which has its authority residing in a creed, pope, council, etc., is the wrong church.

Christ must direct the worship of the church. Under the apostle's guidance, the members of the early church engaged in the following acts of worship:

- (1) They partook of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7).
- (2) They gave of their material means (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- (3) They sang (Colossians 3:16).
- (4) They prayed (Acts 2:42).
- (5) They taught (Acts 2:42).

This plan of worship cannot be altered without denying the authority of Christ. To introduce other items, or to omit those specified, can render our worship vain. Jesus said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

Again, the Bible says: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Those who add the playing of mechanical instruments in the worship transgress the authority of Christ. When the Lord's Supper is omitted from the worship on the first day of the week, it is by the authority of human wisdom and without regard for the authority of Christ.

Many believe that worship rendered in sincerity is acceptable, but Jesus said: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). To worship in truth is to worship according to God's word. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The true worship God requires is simple, free from the pomp and ceremony so apparent in most denominations today.

Christ must direct the work of the church. As the body of Christ, the church is to do the work of Christ. Its great work is preaching the gospel of Christ. Paul speaks of "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). It is to uphold and support the truth and see that it is preached to the whole world (Mark 16:15-16). The work of the church also includes ministering to the poor (Galatians 6:10; Acts 2:43-45). The church of Christ is not an entertainment establishment or a social institution. It is not in the recreation business, but in the soul-saving business. Christ does not direct it into these areas, where so many churches seem to be.

Christ must direct the terms of membership in His church. Churches that have their beginnings with men have man-made terms of membership—perhaps, the telling of an “experience of grace,” or the signing of a card, etc.

But Christ is the authority over the church, which He built, and He directs the terms of membership that are the same as His terms of salvation. When one believes, repents, confesses Christ, and is baptized, one is forgiven of sins; and the Lord adds to His church such as should be saved (Acts 2:47). Any church that fails to teach these terms of salvation and church membership is not the right church.

5. The right church is the one that has heaven as its destiny.

Many churches say one does not need to be a member in order to go to heaven. Any church of which one does not have to be a member, in order to go to heaven, is an unnecessary church. It is the wrong church, for the right church is composed of the saved (Acts 2:47). The church is the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13); and, when Christ comes again, He will deliver the kingdom up to God: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” (1 Corinthians 15:24).

INVESTIGATION INVITED

The church of Christ in your community invites your earnest investigation. You should find it coincides with the church you read about in your Bible, the church that had its beginning on the day of Pentecost. It glorifies and honors Christ, its founder and head, by wearing His name. It recognizes the absolute authority of the law of Christ to direct its worship and work, being faithful to proclaim His terms of pardon and church membership.

ADDENDUM, OCTOBER 1986

This booklet was first published in 1954. In recent years, various religious groups have taken unto themselves the name “Church of Christ,” but have not yet adopted the method outlined by the inspired writers of the New Testament for church membership, the church being the Kingdom of God; nor have they conformed to the method of worship as set out therein. Then, too, some congregations have departed from the true pattern, but still wear the name. They are no longer the true church, which Jesus came to establish. **“SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES.”**

For emphasis, let it be stated again:

**SOMETHING IS WRONG,
BUT THE BIBLE IS RIGHT.**

—PART THREE—
**THE BIBLE IS RIGHT ABOUT THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**

When one obeys the gospel, one gains the forgiveness of sins and becomes a member of the church of Christ. But what about one's life from this point? Many claim, "Once saved, always saved"—that it is impossible for a child of God to sin so as to be lost, or to "fall from grace." This is known as the doctrine of "impossibility of apostasy," taught by most religious groups. If this doctrine were true, there would be little need to stress the necessity of right living. But is this doctrine true?

1. The Bible warns against falling.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). God had a purpose for putting these words in the Bible. If it were impossible for a child of God to fall, this would be a meaningless, useless, deceptive warning. The very time when the Christian is most likely to fall is when he "thinketh he standeth." The apostle Paul thought he could fall, saying, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27). How is it Paul thought he could fall, but some think they cannot?

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2. The Bible tells of some who did fall.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:4, 5). This was the Lord's message to the church at Ephesus. To the Christians in Galatia, Paul wrote: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Again, Paul noted: "Some are already turned aside after Satan" (1 Timothy 5:15). How is it that some fell then, but now one cannot?

3. The Bible describes the terrible state of the fallen. "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" (2 Peter 2:20-21). Does the Bible describe a state that is impossible to enter?

From these scriptures, one may see that a Christian can sin so as to be lost. The church of Christ must uphold and support the truth of the Bible, on this and all other matters of faith. The Bible does not teach eternal salvation regardless of how one has lived. There is no doctrine so deceptive and detrimental to the child of God as the one that says a person cannot so sin as to be lost. That doctrine had its origin in the Garden of Eden, when the serpent said, "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

WHAT MUST A CHRISTIAN DO TO REMAIN SAVED?

The Bible teaches the Christian can be lost, but it also teaches him what to do to remain saved. The New Testament's 21 books, Romans through Jude, were written to Christians to tell them what to do to remain saved. Much of the book of Revelation gives similar instructions. We cannot consider all in this brief work, but we can consider a few outstanding things a Christian must do.

1. Be a Christian only.

It is important that the church glorify and honor Christ by wearing His name; it is, likewise, important that the individual wear the name of Christ. The God-given name for the child of God is "Christian." "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

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This is the name whereby we glorify God: “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16). “Christian” is the name we wear, and a person must not wear any other name that would distinguish him differently from the rest of God’s children.

Division is a grievous sin in the sight of God. In Galatians 5:19, 20, it is condemned as a work of the flesh; and “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21). To the Corinthian Christians, Paul said: “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Corinthians 3:3).

There is nothing that contributes so greatly to division as the wearing of different names. The denominational world is an example, with names such as Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, etc., emphasizing the differences existing between them. Each name declares, “I am different from you.”

The division among the Christians at Corinth had its roots in the wearing of party names. Some said, “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:12). Paul condemned the wearing of divisive names. He asked: “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” Follow the logic! If Christ is divided, then wear your different name. If Paul was crucified for you, then wear the name of Paul. If you were baptized in the name of Paul, then it is right to be a Paulite.

But here is the truth: Christ is not divided; therefore, wear His name alone. We are baptized in the name of Christ, therefore, wear the name of Christ. Be a Christian only. The church of Christ condemns division because the Bible condemns it. We do not plead with people to become a particular kind of Christian, but to become Christians only. We will be lost by being more.

2. Be a fruitful Christian.

The necessity of bearing fruit for Christ is made clear in the words of our Lord: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away” (John 15:2). In verse six of the same reading, He said: “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” This shows that the unfruitful Christian will be lost. But fruitage for the Lord and our final salvation can be assured by adding the Christian graces. “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-11). But, if the Christian does not add these things in his life, he will be barren and unfruitful, thus, causing himself to be cut off.

3. Be a cautious Christian.

The Christian needs to be constantly awake to the dangers that threaten his soul.

He needs to watch himself. Paul exhorted Timothy: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16). Again, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). The man who thinks he is above falling deceives himself. “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Galatians 6:3). Hear this admonition: “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (James 5:12). Yes, the Christian needs to be cautious.

He needs to watch others. Paul warns: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

Peter told Christians: “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, ... And many shall follow their pernicious ways; ... and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you” (2 Peter 2:1-3). It is the bitter truth that there are those in the world today who would merchandise in the souls of men. There are even those who would wrest the scriptures, twisting and perverting them, bringing the fall of the Christian. “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Peter 3:17).

4. Be a faithful Christian.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). It is possible to become unfaithful to the Lord, as did the Christians in the church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:4-5). The Christian should be faithful to Christ in the discharge of his duty, in every place he might be found. He should be faithful to the church, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:25-26).

ARE THERE PROVISIONS FOR THE FALLEN CHRISTIAN?

God in His mercy has provided a second law of pardon for the erring Christian. This law is illustrated in the case of Simon the sorcerer. When this man heard Philip preach the gospel, he “believed” and “was baptized” (Acts 8:13). In so doing, he obeyed the gospel of Christ, for Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). But, after being saved, Simon sinned, attempting to purchase the gift of God with money (Acts 8:18-19).

These words reveal the true condition of the erring Christian and the cure for it: “But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me (Acts 8:2-24).

The unfaithful Christian must repent. The Lord commanded unfaithful Christians at Ephesus: “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:5).

The erring Christian must pray for forgiveness. Peter told Simon to repent and pray. Prayer is one of the great spiritual blessings that belong to those “in Christ.” In writing to the children of God, John said: “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Confession of fault has a place also. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

If you had to stand before the judgment seat of Christ today, how would it go with you? What would the King say to you? Would it be, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”? (Matthew 25:34). Or, would it be, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”? (Matthew 25:41). **If you are not a faithful Christian, you are in no condition to meet your Maker.**

It is our prayer that the words in this booklet will cause you to think and obey the gospel of Christ.