

KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
01

AN INTRODUCTION

The newsletter you hold in your hand is the end result of several years of in-depth planning, careful thought, and hard work. It is a sincere and diligent attempt to open a conversation about the most important subject in our lives—the subject of religion. Over the next 15 weeks, a newsletter will be hand-delivered to your door. The goal is to allow you to consider the content of these newsletters at your own pace, on your own terms. At the end of these 15 weeks, we will come by to ask what you thought about these newsletters, get your feedback on them, and to see if you are interested in discussing them or any other issues in further detail.

The question that you may ask yourself is, "Why?" Why would we invest the time and effort in delivering these newsletters to you and asking you about them at the end of that time? The answer is simple: we believe that the material contained in these letters is of vital importance to you and to every other human being on the planet. We believe in a God that created all things and to whom

all human beings are accountable. We believe that there are specific things that all men and women must believe and do in order to be right with this God. And we want to offer the opportunity to all men and women to be aware of these things.

We believe that these things are of the utmost importance—more important than politics, more important than the economy, more important than any other endeavor human beings can be involved in. But we also believe that this great God has given every human being the right to listen to these things or not. He does not *force* individuals to listen to or obey him—he allows each to determine for themselves what they will do. This does not mean he will accept whatever men and women choose to do. It simply means he allows men and women to make their own choices and determine what way they will go. We therefore act in the same way—we do not seek to *force* you or anyone to agree with these things. But we do want to call attention to them and give you and all who may want to consider them the opportunity to

do so. We want to give everyone the opportunity to believe and do the things that God wants them to do.

You may not agree with what we have to say on these issues. We do not demand that you agree. We simply ask, "Will you consider these things with us for the next 15 weeks?" We believe that this is a study and discussion with eternal consequences. Compared to the length and importance of eternity, 15 weeks is such a short time. Won't you take the time to consider these — *SEE page 2*

Did You Know?

You can read about the church of Christ in the Bible! It was established on the day of Pentecost about the year AD 33 (Acts 2:47). It was collectively called "the churches of Christ" in Romans 16:16 to describe who purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28) and to whom the church belongs (Matthew 16:18). That same church exists today, striving to do all things "in the name of Jesus"—by his will and with his authority (Colossians 3:17).

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Words Of The Week: "Rightly Dividing"

The term "rightly dividing" comes from the instruction given to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The phrase comes from a compound Greek word: *orthotomeo*. *Ortho* means "straight" or "right" (you might recognize it from such English words as "orthopedics" or "orthodontics") and *tomeo* means "to cut." Together, the terms mean "to make a straight cut" or "to dissect or expound correctly."

Many today look at Bible study as something that requires little or no effort. A couple minutes of reading here and there is all that is necessary. Any conclusion or interpretation one reaches is OK as long as it was reached "sincerely"—no matter how far it is from the truth. However, what the term "rightly dividing" shows is that such ideas are completely mistaken. It is only by searching "as for hid treasures" that we will "find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:4-5). The Bereans "searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so" to see whether the things Paul told them "were so" (Acts 17:11). Bible study must be more than a half-hearted endeavor if it is to succeed.

The Bible *can* be understood (John 8:31-32), but to do so, we must make a "straight cut." That will take our time, our dedication, and our determination to *rightly divide* the word of God.

FROM page 1 — things with us? Won't you take the time to search out the answers for your-

self? We hope that you will. And we hope that you will be benefited by it.

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

Why study the Bible? Bible study is the bedrock on which our relationship with God is built and the foundation upon which every aspect of Christianity rests. Without it, we are left adrift in a sea of personal opinion, man-made doctrines, and ever-shifting moral standards. With it, we are able to know what the God of this universe expects of us and therefore can know that we are pleasing to him.

The Bible is God's standard. Though men may attempt to replace God's will with their own ideas, all such attempts fail. Speaking of those who tried to do so in his own day, Jesus said, "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**" (Matthew 15:8-9). It is God's will, and God's will *alone* that provides the standard for what man should and must do. Addressing those who rejected him, Jesus stated, "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). If Jesus' will is the standard by which all men will be judged at the end of time, then it becomes vitally important that all men learn what his will is so that they can

stand before God and be right on that day.

Some argue that Bible study is not necessary. They claim that God reveals his will in many different places in many different ways, even up to this modern day. But such is not the case! There is only *one* source of truth and its delivery was completed long ago. Jude wrote in the first century, "it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was **once delivered** unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6-9: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. **But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.** As we said before, so say I now again, **If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.**" Clearly, any claims of revelation after the first century cannot be accepted in light of these inspired writers. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the source of God's will for mankind.

This fact makes study of the Bible extremely important. Without it, and without the knowledge it provides, no one can be pleas-

ing to God. No other source will allow man to stand before God clean and right. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto **according to thy word**" (Psalm 119:9). This is what motivated those in the city of Berea not simply to listen to the preaching of the apostle Paul, but also to search "the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). They recognized the standard for right and wrong was God's word and they searched it to verify Paul's teachings. What was God's view of this attitude? In the same passage the Bereans were called '**more noble**' because of it (Acts 17:11)!

If you and I want to know God's will and be right with him, we must dedicate ourselves to the charge given to Timothy: "**Study to shew thyself approved unto God**, a workman that

needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Failure to do so means we will one day stand before God unprepared. But if we are willing, are dedicated, and persevere in our study of God's word, all of his promised blessings will be ours. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3).

Why not commit yourself to a study of God's Word today? You have nothing to lose and absolutely everything to gain!

The Bible Quiz

Each week we will bring you questions from the Bible. The answers to each week's questions will be in the following week. Be sure to check back each week to find the answers.

1. What kind of fruit did Eve take from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
2. Who was Isaac's wife?
3. How old was Joseph when he became second in command of Egypt?
4. What important item were Israelites forbidden to have in their houses during Pass-over?

Be sure to check back next week to find the answers to this week's questions!

CAN WE KNOW TRUTH?

"**T**here are no absolutes." So declared Friedrich Nietzsche in his 1878 treatise, *Human, All Too Human*. The concept was not new with Nietzsche: as long as man has existed there have been those who have denied the existence of truth. From the Garden of Eden, where man first believed the lie that God's will was not absolute ("Ye shalt **not** surely die" Genesis 3:4), to the famous question of the infamous Pilate ("What is truth?" John 18:38), to our present era of postmodernism and moral relativity, every age has had

those who cried out, "You *cannot* know truth!"

But the message of scripture has always been the exact opposite. As man cried out that truth was unattainable, Scripture cried even louder that not only could man *know* truth, he could know it so completely that he could *live* it. "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth..." (Psalm 86:11). The reasons man *can* know truth are threefold.

First, God is a God of truth. Unlike the false gods in Greek and Roman mythology for whom lying and falsehood was second nature, the One True God "will not lie" (1 Samuel 15:29).

— SEE page 4

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

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FROM page 3 — Indeed, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

Second, God has revealed his truth to mankind. In the days of the Patriarchs, he revealed that truth directly to the heads of families through Adam, Abraham, Jacob, and others. In the days of Israel, he encapsulated his truth in the great Law that his nation was to live by (Deuteronomy 4:1ff). Finally, "in these last days"—the final age of revelation—God has "spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:2). As Jesus stood before Pilate, he made his mission abundantly clear, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). Jesus revealed that truth to all men by his life, by his teachings, and by the writings of inspired men (Ephesians 3:1-4).

Third, because God is a God of truth, that which he

has revealed is Truth. Jesus himself, praying to the Father for the disciples, said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). This was a simple restatement of the reality revealed centuries earlier: "Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth" (Psalm 119:151).

But some may still ask, "Even though God has revealed his truth, does that mean I can *know* it? Can *I*, a mere mortal, understand the truth that has been delivered by the Creator of the Universe?" The answer of scripture is a resounding, "YES!" In John 8, addressing those who believed in him, Jesus said "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

There is no hesitation in Jesus' statement. There are no "mights" or "maybes." There is simply a clear, unalterable "*shall*." The Bible has all the truth we need. 2 Peter 1:3 says that "through the knowledge of

him" God has "given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." In fact, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, when we study, learn, and remain in the teachings contained in Scripture, we have all the truth we need to be right with God.

The world may loudly declare that "there are no absolutes" or that truth is unknowable, but the Bible declares even more loudly that truth *does exist* and that you and I and all men *can know it!* Let us dedicate ourselves to learning the great and wonderful truth contained in his precious Word so that we will have the freedoms that the Bible and the Bible alone makes possible.

"For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

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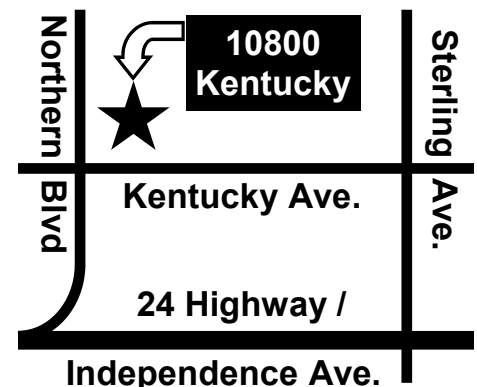
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



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*"And you shall know the truth,
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NO
02

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

*For every house is builded
by some man; but he that
built all things is God.
(Hebrews 3:4)*

A study of the proofs that support the Christian faith is often ridiculed by the world and even portrayed as impossible by some who claim to be Christians. But such could not be further from the truth! Not only are such proofs available, they are numerous and sound.

Such a discussion will logically begin with proofs for the existence of God, and proofs of God's existence will just as logically begin with the Cosmological Argument. The Cosmological Argument can be most easily summarized by the law of cause and effect: for every effect, there *must* be a *sufficient* cause.

Imagine you are walking past a worksite and noticed a large wrecking ball crane with its cab completely smashed in. A man is standing nearby looking at the crane. You ask the man what happened and he says, "I parked the crane, got off, and turned around. Then a mosquito landed on top of the cab and completely crushed it!" Without asking any further questions, you would automatically know one of two

things: either the man is a liar or he is in need of medical attention. Why? Because the *cause* of a mosquito is no where near *sufficient* for the effect of a destroyed crane cab.

That simple truth, applied to the natural world, is the Cosmological Argument. The amazing universe we live in with all its untold vastness and immense size begs an answer of the reasoning man: *Where did it all come from? What is the cause?*

Some would have us believe that the world is the result of an explosion—a Big Bang—billions of years ago. But when you ask, "What exploded?" the best answer that man can currently give is, "Why, a ball of matter no larger than a period!" To the rational mind, this makes no sense. Even if you shrank the Sun to the size of a penny, the nearest neighboring star, Proxima Centauri, would still be 350 miles away (that's 25 quadrillion full-sized miles!). Keeping the penny-sized Sun, the Milky Way Galaxy would still be 7.5 million miles in diameter (30 times the full-sized distance from Earth to the moon)! The Milky Way contains an estimated 200-400 billion stars. Even more impressive is

the estimate that there are 170 billion galaxies in the observable universe. *And we are to believe this all came from a tiny dot?*

But probe further and the answers get even more ridiculous. *Q: "Where did the dot come from?" A: "From nothing!"* That's right, the current "best answer" for the origin of our enormous universe is—*absolutely nothing!* So nothing became an incredibly tiny almost-nothing which exploded into an unfathomably gigantic something.

Though the "learned" world may scoff at the — *SEE page 2*

Did You Know?

*Many of the most important minds in science have believed in God and creation! From Isaac Newton (the father of physics), to Francis Bacon (The father of science), to Louis Pasteur (the father of microbiology), to Carl Linnaeus (the father of taxonomy) to Albert Einstein himself (who famously said, "God does not play dice with the universe"), the greatest minds in science throughout history have all agreed on one thing: *There is a God!**

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Word Of The Week: "Fearfully"

In Psalm 139:14, as the inspired author discussed the greatness of God as seen in the human body, he used a term that at first glance might seem out of place: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." While we might easily understand the fact the body is "wonderfully" made, how can it also be "fearfully" made?

The term "fearfully" comes from the Hebrew term *yawray* which literally means to "fear" or to "frighten." It is in that sense that Adam was "**afraid**" and hid from God after eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:10), that Saul and all Israel were "greatly **afraid**" of Goliath (1 Samuel 17:11), and the pagan sailors of Jonah's ship, beholding the great storm that fell upon them, "were **afraid**" (Jonah 1:5).

But this same Hebrew term is also used in a very different way: to "revere." In this way, Israel was instructed "Ye shall **fear** every man his mother, and his father" (Leviticus 19:3)—not to be afraid of parents, but to *re-spect* them. In the same way, Solomon said that everyone should "**Fear** God, and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Thus, it is this reverential usage of "fear" that the Psalmist invokes as he considers his physical existence. The human body is such a truly amazing and wonderful creation, that when properly understood, it leads man to respect, to revere, to *fear* the awesome God who made it.

FROM page 1 —

notion of "God," what it offers us in return is not just laughable but ludicrous. No amount of man-made speculation can account for the enormity of the Cosmos. Only a Creator, infinite in strength and power, can ever possibly answer the question of where our universe comes from. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead..." (Romans 1:20). As

the Psalmist noted long, long ago, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3).

How can we be certain that there is a God? The Cosmological Argument says just look at the universe around you! It makes a very big, very clear statement—*there **is** a God!*

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The Teleological Argument is closely related to the Cosmological Argument. Both examine causes. But whereas the Cosmological Argument asks, "What is the cause of the *universe*?" the Teleological Argument asks, "What is the cause of the *design* in the universe?"

The universe we live in is an intricately complex machine. From the expansive sweep of galaxies to the microscopic organization of subatomic particles, our universe exhibits a stunning level of complexity. The inquiring mind wants to know, "Where did this order come from?"

The scientific world is left with the same unsatisfying answer as before: a Big Bang. But even if it was followed by billions of years of time, how could an explosion *ever* produce the exquisite detail we see around us today? Such an answer is incomprehensible to the human mind.

One of the best known illustrations of the teleological argument was made by William Paley. In the first chapter of *Natural Theol-*

ogy, published in 1802, Paley argued that certain things, by their very nature, require the existence of an intelligent, skilled designer. He asks the reader to suppose that he found a watch on the ground. Even a cursory examination of the watch would lead to an inescapable conclusion "that the watch must have had a maker: that there must have existed, at some time and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use." Paley then extends the application to nature "Every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design, which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature; with the difference, on the side of nature, of being greater or more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation."

Consider the complexity of the modern digital camera with its precision ground lenses, intricate machinery, and complex circuitry. Anyone claiming it was the prod-

uct of an accident would be ridiculed, and rightly so—it is clearly the creation of an intelligent designer. Yet no camera can compare to the complexity of the human eye. Are we to believe the eye was “just an accident”? The fantastic computational ability of the computer demands the existence of a skilled maker. But such ability pales in comparison to the human mind that created it. If the computer requires a designer, why not the mind? The precise control of a simple hydraulic lift demands years of training and expertise to design and build. Yet the complex natural precision of a hand or an arm is supposedly the result of years of blind, random

chance. The rational mind cries out, “How can this be?” Yet the number of similar illustrations from nature is endless.

While it may be fashionable today to speak of the natural world arising by pure accident, the amazing realities of such a world can never be answered with, “It just happened!” The unimaginable complexity and exquisite detail we see around us every day leads to one inescapable conclusion: a Great Designer capable of producing it. As the Psalmist said long ago, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psalm 139:14).

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORIGINS

Origins matter. Where we came from impacts every aspect of our lives. There are two commonly proposed origins for mankind: either the theory of Evolution or the Biblical account of Creation. These two ideas stand in sharp contrast and paint starkly different pictures of what we are, how we are to live, and where we ultimately are going.

When one considers the question, “*What am I?*,” the answers supplied are diametrically opposed. **Evolution** teaches that man’s origin is **natural** because nothing outside of the natural world was involved in the process, man’s origin is **accidental** because man is simply the result of a long string of random events, and thus man is an **animal**, nothing more, nothing less. **Creation** states that man’s origin is **super-**

natural because it is due to something beyond the natural world, man’s origin is **purposeful** because it was specific and determined, and that man’s true nature is **spiritual** because he was created in the image of God. One sees these principles clearly in passages like Genesis 1:26-27 where we are told, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

The distinctions continue when one asks, “**How should I live?**” The life ordered on the premises of Evolution will be bleak indeed. It will have every

— SEE page 4

The Bible Quiz

1. How much time did God take to create all things?
2. What was the name of the first woman?
3. Who requested John the Baptist’s head on a charger?
4. Which Apostle doubted Jesus’ resurrection?
5. What do the heavens and the firmament declare and show about God?
6. How many men did God select to fight with Gideon?

LAST WEEK’S ANSWERS:

1. The Bible never says (cf. Genesis 2-3)
2. Rebekah (Genesis 24:67)
3. 30 years old (Genesis 41:46)
4. Leaven (Exodus 12:19)

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FROM page 3 — compulsion to be self-centered and selfish as nothing greater than the “I” exists. Even helping another will ultimately be driven by what is best for self. Such a life will have every motivation to be materialistic and worldly since this world is all that is. There can be no true value in *any* life—one’s own or any other’s—because each is the result of the same purposeless events. There can be no universal justice, truth, good, beauty, or even evil, since such would be human inventions. And there can be no consequence for man’s action beyond physical pleasure and pain or the protection or loss of life. On the other hand, the one who accepts Creation is prompted to embrace a very different lifestyle. He recognizes that what he does has an impact beyond this life (2 Corinthians 5:10). He is concerned with obeying the One who created him, being holy as his Creator is holy, not just because it is demanded (1 Peter 1:15-16), but also because it is inherently right. And he

treats his fellow man in fundamentally different ways—loving his neighbor as himself (Matthew 22:39), doing good to all men (Galatians 6:10), even giving his life for his friend (John 15:13), and loving his enemies (Matthew 5:44)—not simply out of a sense of obedience, but because he also recognizes each and every human being bears an eternal soul as well.

But perhaps the most considerable differences arise when one considers, **“Where am I going?”** Evolution teaches that since man is nothing more than an animal, then death is the ultimate end; the grave marks the conclusion not simply of physical life, but of existence as well. Creation proclaims the exact opposite: since man is made in the image of a spiritual God (Genesis 1:26-27; John 4:24), then even when man’s physical body returns to the earth, his spirit continues on and returns to the One Who Gave It (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Though Creation includes the possibility of punishment in a place called

hell (Matthew 10:28), such is neither required nor desired by God, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Creation, and only Creation, promises the reality of eternal existence after death (John 3:16) in a place that is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading (1 Peter 1:4), where every tear shall be wiped away (Revelation 21:4) and even death itself “is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

The answers Creation and Evolution supply to the most fundamental questions in our lives are vastly different. To Evolution, we are but accidental, purposeless animals, destined to live and die as all other animals do. To Creation, we are valuable, intentional expressions of an Almighty God, living lives of true meaning and looking forward to great blessings in the end. Whichever we choose to embrace will have great consequences in this life and beyond. Truly, origins do matter!

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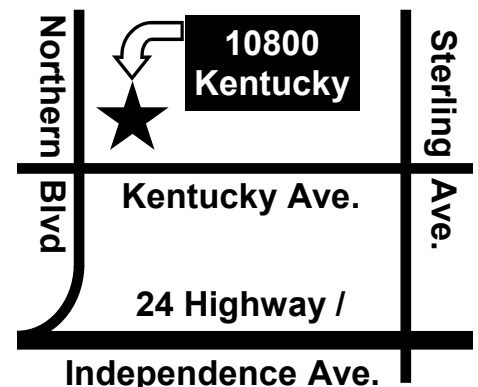
— Services & Times —

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Worship 9:50 AM
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NO
03

PROOFS OF INSPIRATION: UNITY AND ACCURACY

The Bible claims inspiration without hesitation. 2 Timothy 3:16 states it is "given by inspiration of God"—literally, "God-breathed." "Thus saith the LORD" occurs in one form or another around 3000 times. David said God's Spirit "spake" by him (2 Samuel 23:2), and Moses (Numbers 12:8), Isaiah (51:16), Jeremiah (1:9), Ezekiel (3:4), Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:13), and many others made similar claims. Jesus said his words came from "the Father" (John 14:10) and that his apostles would be guided into "all truth" (John 16:13). But it's one thing to *claim* inspiration (after all, *other* books do the same). It's another thing altogether to contain enough evidence to *prove* it. The Bible does just that.

The Bible's UNITY proves its inspiration. Consider the following: The 66 individual books of the Bible contain a vast array of subjects and literary styles (history, poetry, religious law, sermons, prophecy, dreams, etc.). 1600 years separate the writing of the first book from the last. The forty different penmen of the Bible came from completely different backgrounds

(educated under Pharaohs, kings in palaces, shepherds, statesmen in the conqueror's courts, tax collectors, physicians, simple fishermen, and many more), wrote under vastly different circumstances (in war, in peace, in persecution, in captivity, in prison, in exile, and more), and wrote in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). Yet from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible exhibits a flawless unity! How can that be possible? The only answer is Divine inspiration.

The Bible's SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY proves its inspiration. The Bible contained scientific truths millennia before men recognized them. *Woman has a "seed" (Genesis 3:15):* But before science finally agreed with that, woman was simply seen an incubator for the male. *Circumcision on the 8th day (Genesis 17:12):* By the eighth day, a child has more *prothrombin* (a key blood-clotting molecule) than at any other point in its life. *Life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11-14):* Yet George Washington died from a minor infection after "experts" *drained* his blood to "cure" him. *Degradation of the universe (Psalm 102:25-26):*

This concept was not widely accepted by science until the discovery of the Second Laws of Thermodynamics in the late 1800's. *Innumerable stars (Jeremiah 33:22):* Until the 20th century, great astronomers like Hipparchus, Ptolemy, Brahe, Kepler barely claimed there were more than a thousand. Today, the number has exploded beyond 70 sextillion (7 followed by 22 zeroes). How was such scientific accuracy possible? The only answer is Divine inspiration.

The Bible's HISTORICAL ACCURACY — SEE page 2

Did You Know?

The Bible demands to be tested! Israel was to check if a prophet's word came "to pass" (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Jesus said to believe him only if he did the works of God (John 10:37-38). Christians are to "try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1) and "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). And those in Berea were called "more noble" because they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Inspiration"

Understanding Biblical inspiration is essential to understanding the Bible. There are four main views of inspiration. Which of them a person believes makes a very important difference.

General Inspiration: The Bible was written by men without God's help. It is good literature, but it is not the Word of God.

Partial Inspiration: Parts of the Bible are from God, but other parts are from men and may include error. No one can fully know which parts are which.

Thought Inspiration: God gave his thoughts to human writers, but let them interpret those thoughts on their own, using their fallible, human judgment.

These three ideas are popular, but they all end in the same place: the Bible contains human elements and thus cannot be trusted as a standard of right and wrong. However, there is another idea of Biblical inspiration.

Plenary Verbal Inspiration: God used individual characteristics of each writer to record exactly what *God* wanted in every detail. Thus the Bible is fully and completely God's Word.

Only this view fits the Bible's claims. David said, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). 2 Timothy 3:16 says all scripture is "given by inspiration of God," a Greek phrase that is literally translated "God-breathed." In fact, the Bible uses some form of "thus says the Lord" thousands of times. Clearly the Bible claims to be *inspired*, not in general, part, or thought, but in *every single word*.

FROM page 1 — *proves its inspiration.* The Bible recorded numerous facts that "experts" denied—until they became undeniable. *Writing and the Pentateuch:* Critics claim writing developed too long after Moses' death for him to have written the Pentateuch—until written tablets were uncovered in Ras Shamra that dated from 1500 BC. *Advanced law code:* Critics argued the Mosaic law was much too advanced for the 15th century BC—until the Code of Hammurabi was discovered and dated between 2000-1700 BC. *The Hittites (Exodus 23:28; etc):* Critics claimed no

such nation ever existed—until its capital city was uncovered in 1906. *Sargon, king of Assyria (Isaiah 20:1):* Critics stated there was no such king—until his palace was uncovered in 1843. *Luke And Sir William Ramsay:* The archaeologist Sir William Ramsay believed *Acts* was filled with historical flaws. But after years of excavation, he eventually concluded the author of *Acts* was "among the historians of the first rank." (*St. Paul The Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 1895). How was such historical accuracy possible? The only answer is Divine inspiration.

OMISSIONS & UNBIASED NATURE

The Bible's OMISSIONS prove its inspiration.

Consider all of the things that so many other religions include that the Bible omits. *No Origin Of God:* In Egypt, an egg in the ocean hatched Amun-Ra (sun) who produced Shu (air, male) and Tefnut (moisture, female) who bore Geb (earth, male) and Nut (sky, female) who bore Set and Osiris (gods) and Isis and Nephthys (goddesses), who in turn produced even more gods. In Babylon, Apsu (fresh water, male) and Tiamat (salt water, female) bore many gods, among whom was Marduk, who defeated his parents and used the split halves of Tiamat to form heaven and earth. In Greece, Gaea (earth) and Uranus (heaven) produced the Titans, among whom was Cronus, who overthrew them, married his sister Rhea, sired five children whom he swallowed because of a prophecy, and was eventually overthrown by the

sixth, Zeus, because Rhea gave him a stone to swallow instead. In the Bible, there is no origin for Jehovah. He is simply present "in the beginning" (Genesis 1:1). *Monotheism:* Unlike every other ancient religion, the Bible states not only that there is one God for Israel (Deuteronomy 6:4), but that there is only one God *at all* (Isaiah 45:5; 2 Kings 19:17-19). *The Ark of the Covenant:* After it is placed in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 8:1-11), there is no more discussion about the use, location, or even continued existence of this most important religious emblem. *Joseph and Mary:* Beyond the events recorded in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, the only reference to Joseph is that Jesus was "the carpenter's son" (Matthew 13:55) and Mary is only mentioned at Jesus' cross (John 19:26) and with the disciples afterward (Acts 1:14). *The Apostles:* Other than the fact some were fishermen (Mark 1:16-

20), Matthew collected taxes (Matthew 9:9), and Paul was a tent-maker (Acts 18:3), little is known of their secular life. Outside of Peter's marriage (Luke 4:38), little is known of their families. Beyond Peter and Paul, we have almost no record of their work after Jesus' ascension. Except for Judas (Matthew 27:3-5) and James (Acts 12:1-2) we have no record of their death. *In these and many other areas*, what could possibly explain the Bible's silence on such fascinating mysteries and exciting details? The only answer is Divine inspiration.

The Bible's UNBIASED NATURE proves its inspiration.

The Bible does not hide the sins of its heroes or the righteous acts of its enemies. *Adam and Eve* were forced to leave Eden because of sin (Genesis 3). *Noah* was saved because of his righteousness but then planted a vineyard and got drunk (Genesis 6:8-9; 9:20-21). *Moses*, Israel's great leader, could not enter Canaan because of his rebellion (Numbers 20:1-13). *Samson*, the strong man, visited a

harlot and was made a fool of by Delilah (Judges 16:1, 4-20). *Saul*, the first king, rebelled against God, had his kingship removed, and spent the rest of his reign in a psychopathic pursuit of David (1 Samuel 13:8-16; 15:1-31; chp. 18-26). *David*, Israel's national hero, committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11). *Solomon*, Israel's most powerful king, was given wisdom by God and built the temple, but then married pagan wives and fell into idolatry (1 Kings 3:5-15; chp. 5-7; 11:1-8). *Naaman* was healed by God even though he was the captain of the Syrian army, invaded Israel, and even took captives (2 Kings 5:1-14). *Nineveh* was spared by God when it repented (Jonah 3:10), even though it was the capital of the Assyrian nation, which would ultimately destroy Israel (2 Kings 17:5-6). *Peter*, one of Jesus' closest apostles, denied him three times (Matthew 26:69-75). *In these and many other examples*, what could possibly explain such an honest and unbiased nature? The only answer is Divine inspiration

The Bible Quiz

1. What was Moses' brother's name?
2. How many spies went into Canaan?
3. Who is Lucifer?
4. How old was Moses when he died?
5. How many times did Peter deny Jesus?
6. What was Esther's other name?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. 6 days (Genesis 1:31-2:1)
2. Eve (Genesis 3:20)
3. Herodias, by way of her daughter (Matthew 14:6-8)
4. Thomas (John 20:24-25)
5. His glory and handiwork (Psalm 19:1)
6. 300 (Judges 7:7)

PROPHECY AND WITNESSES

The Bible's PROPHECY proves its inspiration.

The Bible recorded hundreds of events centuries before they occurred. *Abraham's Descendants*: In 1910 BC, 80 year-old, childless Abraham would have innumerable offspring (Genesis 15:1-5). By 1490 BC, he did (Numbers 1:45-46). *Israel's Kings*: In 1490 BC, Israel would desire a king to be like "the nations" (Deuteronomy 17:14). In 1090 BC, she did (1 Samuel 8:5). *Israel's History*: In 1490 BC, Is-

rael would be destroyed and captured but return (Deuteronomy 28-30). Between 606-536 BC, she did (2 Kings 24; Ezra 1). *Cyrus*: In 740 BC Cyrus would be God's "shepherd" (Isaiah 44:28-45:4). In 559 BC, he let Israel return (Ezra 1). *The Fall of Nations*: In 740 BC, every major world power would fall (Isaiah 10-24). They did—Assyria (600 BC), Babylon (538 BC), Egypt (330 BC), Tyre (331 BC). *The Change in Covenant*: Around 600 BC, a new covenant would

— SEE page 4

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FROM page 3 — replace the old (Jeremiah 31:31-34). In the first century AD, it did (Hebrews 8:8-13; Ephesians 2:11-16). Messianic Prophecies: The Bible predicted Jesus would descend from Abraham (Genesis 22:18 / Matthew 1:1) and Jesse (Isaiah 11:1 / Matthew 1:1), be born in the fourth world empire (Rome) (Daniel 2:44 / Luke 2:1) to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14 / Matthew 1:18-25) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 / Matthew 2:1-6), enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9 / Matthew 21:1-5), be preceded by John (Isaiah 40:1-3 / Matthew 3:1-3), be resurrected (Psalm 16:8-10 / Acts 2:23-32), and much, much more. Psalm 22 said he would cry "My God, My God" (v1 / Matthew 27:46), be ridiculed (vv6-8 / Matthew 27:39-43), be thirsty (v15 / John 19:28), be pierced (v16 / John 20:20-28), and have his garments parted (v18 / Matthew 27:35). Isaiah 53 prophesied he would be despised and rejected (v3 / Matthew 27:21-23), be wounded, bruised, and beaten (v5 / Matthew 27:26-31), bear sins yet heal all men by suffering

(vv4-6, 10-12 / 1 Peter 2:21-25), and make his grave with the rich (v9 / Matthew 27:57-60), among others. All came to pass, hundreds and sometimes even thousands of years after the initial prophecies. What could possibly explain such amazing predictive ability? The only answer is Divine inspiration.

The Bible's WITNESSES proves its inspiration. Consider the New Testament. There was more than one witness: Multiple individuals claimed the same facts (John 21:24; Acts 2:32; Galatians 1:11-12; 2 Peter 1:16-21). They were willing to suffer and die for their beliefs: While such is not proof in itself, the case of these witnesses, the apostles, is unique. They could not have been deceived about Jesus: Along with divinity, Jesus also claimed to do amazing miracles (raising the dead, feeding 5000, etc.). These, his closest associates, would have known whether he truly did those things or not (cf. 1 John 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:16-18). They did not stay under Jesus' oversight: A

charismatic leader may keep followers while he is present. But the apostles, after barely three years of contact, had only their own personal claims to keep them faithful to Jesus. They were faced with multiple difficulties: These men endured continual hardship and trials beginning immediately after Jesus' death until their own. They could not have been self seeking: Unlike other religious leaders, they did not seek physical power, wealth, or pleasure, because following Christ offered nothing but self-sacrifice. And yet they remained faithful to Jesus: Secular history reports that every apostle except John was killed because of his faith—and John was sent into exile. What could make these men, who knew Jesus on such a personal level, remain true to him when every other aspect of life was applying tremendous pressure to stop? The only reasonable explanation is that like Thomas, each believed Jesus was, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

The only answer is Divine inspiration!

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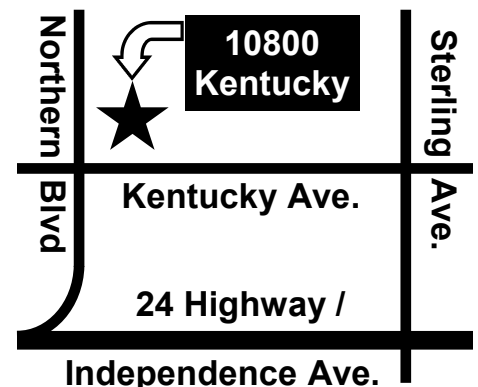
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
04

OLD TESTAMENT OVERVIEW

Though the Bible is the most important and influential book ever written, most people know very little about it. And while a thorough understanding of the Bible is a life-long endeavor, even a brief study of the structure and content of the Bible can be of great benefit.

The Bible (from the Greek *biblos*, or "book") is not actually one single book, but a collection of 66 books and letters written over a period of roughly 1600 years. These books of the Bible are divided into two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament is the first major division in the Bible and makes up roughly 75% of its total content. It records nearly 4000 years of history and is composed of 39 books written originally in Hebrew and Chaldee over the course of 1000-1100 years (1490-400 BC). The major focus of the Old Testament is the religion and history of the Jewish nation. But woven into and throughout the entire Old Testament is another vitally important theme: the coming of the Messiah. This theme will be discussed in the concluding article.

There are five *major divisions* of the Old Testament. It is important to remember that these divisions are not necessarily in chronological order, but are generally grouped by topics or style of literature. These divisions are:

#1 The Law / The Pentateuch (5 books): Genesis to Deuteronomy.

Written between 1490-1450 BC and covering roughly 2500 years of history, these first five books provide important information about the origin of the world, life, and mankind, as well as recounting the long history of how the nation of Israel came into existence. Along the way, these books help us understand our human nature (fallible and sinful) as well as God's nature (perfect and holy) and thus the reason for law and religion (so that sinful man can approach a holy God). Toward the end of this section, especially Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, the law given by God to Moses is recorded. This "law of Moses" governed all aspects of religious and civil life in the nation of Israel.

#2 History (12 books): Joshua to Esther. Covering roughly 1000 years, these books of history pick up where the Pen-

tateuch left off, describing how Israel conquered the land of Canaan, established the kingdom of Israel, fell into captivity because of sin, and returned from the same because of renewed faithfulness. These books reinforce the important relationship between a holy God who demands obedience and mankind who can choose both to obey and disobey, but must live with the consequences of that choice.

#3 Poetry / Wisdom Literature (5 books): Job to Song of Solomon. Dealing with a variety of — SEE page 2

Did You Know?

Chapters and verses weren't in the original Bible! At first, each book was one long section of writing. Over the centuries, individuals divided the books into smaller pieces to help them reference passages. Modern Bibles mainly follow the chapter divisions of Stephen Langton (circa AD 1200) and the verse divisions of Robertus Stephanus (AD 1551). The use of these divisions in the influential Geneva Bible (AD 1560) ensured their acceptance and wide use.

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Testament"

The Greek word translated "testament" (*diatheke*) means a contract or a will. In the New Testament it is usually translated "covenant." The corresponding Hebrew word used in the Old Testament (*beriyth*) similarly means a compact or covenant.

Covenants were often made between individuals such as Abraham and Abimelech (Genesis 21:27) or Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 20:16). But the most important covenants were between God and man where God described both his demands and promises if man obeyed.

The most important Old Testament covenant was at Mt. Sinai. There God promised that if Israel would "keep my covenant" they would be his special people (Exodus 19:5-6). It became known as the Law of Moses or the Old Testament. But as important as that old covenant was, it was not intended to endure forever. In Jeremiah 31:31-32 God promised to "make a new covenant."

This *New Covenant* was established over 1500 years later by Jesus. Just like the Old Testament, it outlines his expectations and promises. Like all testaments or wills, it required the "death of the testator" (the death of the one making it) in order to come into force (Hebrews 9:16-17). When Jesus died on the cross, the Old Law was abolished and nailed to the cross and the New Testament was established (Ephesians 2:13-16; Matthew 26:28). Thus, mankind is no longer under the Old Testament, but under the New.

FROM page 1 — subjects, these books are very different in composition. Job is an in-depth examination of the problem of evil, pain, and suffering. Psalms is a collection of 150 individual songs, mainly of praise to God. Proverbs is a collection of wise teachings and instructions. Ecclesiastes explores the nature and purpose of life. The Song of Solomon is an exposition on the joy of the marriage relationship.

#4 Major Prophets (5 books): Isaiah to Daniel. Though grouped together, these

books were actually written over a period of several hundred years. Each book was written during the life of the prophet bearing its name and primarily records the message that God wanted delivered to Israel by that prophet.

#5 Minor Prophets (12 books): Hosea to Malachi. These books are very similar in content and purpose to the major prophets, but differ mainly in that they are much shorter. The terms "Major" and "Minor" refers to this difference in length and not to their importance or value.

NEW TESTAMENT OVERVIEW

The New Testament is the second and final division in the Bible. It records roughly 70 years of history in 27 books and letters written in Greek over a period of 30-40 years. The New Testament reveals the culmination of God's great plan for the salvation of mankind: Jesus the Christ.

There are four major divisions of the New Testament. As in the Old Testament, the books do not necessarily follow a chronological order, but are generally grouped by writer, audience, and length. The divisions of the New Testament are:

#1 Biography / Gospel Accounts (4 books): Matthew to John. Penned between 60-90AD by four different inspired writers, the "Gospels," as they are commonly called, offer four different perspectives of the same single gospel message: the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Though the accounts overlap in many important points, they do emphasize

different aspects of the life and work of Jesus for different audiences. Matthew seems to address a Jewish audience by focusing on Jesus as the Messiah-King and Son of David who fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. In Mark, a possible Roman audience is given a compact picture of the active Son of God and Servant of Jehovah. Luke seems to be telling a Greek audience about the perfect Son of Man who came to seek and save the lost. The apostle John, writing possibly 20-30 years later, provides the Gentile world with the evidence that Jesus is the divine Son of God and God in the flesh.

#2 History (1 book): Acts. Acts covers the roughly 30-35 years between the ascension of Jesus and the imprisonment of Paul in Rome. Along the way, it records the birth of the church, its early persecution, and its spread in spite of all opposition. Beginning with the direct conversion of Gentile Christians in the tenth chapter, the narrative be-

gins to move beyond Palestine. A primary driver of this spread and the primary figure in the book of Acts itself is Saul of Tarsus who initially tries to repress the church but is converted, becomes the Apostle Paul, and makes three long missionary journeys to spread the gospel throughout Asia Minor and Greece. Acts ends with Paul's arrest, imprisonment, and transportation to Rome to stand trial before Caesar.

#3 Epistles / Letters (21 books): Romans to Jude. The next twenty-one books were not originally books at all, but rather 21 letters sent by at least four different inspired writers to various congregations, individuals, or groups. The purpose and content of the books are as varied as the audiences and the situations they are facing. Romans through 2 Thessalonians are written to Christians in specific cities (Rome, Thessalonica, etc) encouraging faithfulness, reminding

of Christian principles, and correcting error. 1 Timothy to Philemon are addressed to individuals. Hebrews seems to be reminding Jewish Christians that Christianity is better than and has replaced Judaism. James to 1 John and Jude are letters to the church as a whole. 2 and 3 John are short letters to "the elect lady" and "Gaius" respectively.

#4 Prophecy (1 book): Revelation. Perhaps no book in the New Testament captures as much attention or is as misunderstood as the last book, the book of Revelation. Its fantastic, graphic, and sometimes fearful descriptions are often misinterpreted as predictions of the end of time. But this is not the case. Instead, the book of Revelation uses the complex imagery of a unique writing style (called "apocalyptic literature") to convey messages to first century Christians about "things which must **shortly** come to pass." (Revelation 1:1).

THE THEME OF THE BIBLE

In all the great sweep of scripture there is one overarching, ever-present theme. It runs through the whole Bible, tying the Old Testament to the New and binding every book from Genesis to Revelation into a single, unified whole. What is this great unifying theme? It is the coming of the Christ and the salvation of mankind!

This great theme begins even before the book of Genesis opens. Speaking to first century Christians, 1 Peter 1:20 says Jesus "was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was

manifest in these last times for you." Thus, before the world even began, God planned this great theme and knew how it would play out through human history.

We see its opening scenes in Genesis 3. There, in the garden of Eden, man takes his first step away from God by disobeying and doing what God had forbidden: eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because of that, man would be cast out. But even in this moment of darkness, the great theme of Scripture begins to shine. God

— SEE page 4

The Bible Quiz

1. What did Solomon ask God to give him?
2. How many books are in the Bible?
3. How many books are in the Old Testament? How many are in the New Testament?
4. What could Israel NOT do to escaped slaves?
5. What relative of Peter did Jesus heal?
6. How long did David reign?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Aaron (Exodus 4:14)
2. 12 (Numbers 13:4-15)
3. The king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4-12)
4. 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7)
5. 3 (Matthew 26:69-75)
6. Hadassah (Esther 2:7)

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FROM page 3 — promises the serpent there would be a “seed of woman” who would “bruise thy head” (Genesis 3:15)—one who would destroy Satan and his power.

Moving forward, the grand theme of Christ and salvation rises to the surface again and again. We see it run through Abraham when he is told “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). It is seen again when his son Isaac is told the same (Genesis 26:4). We catch glimpses of it when God establishes the principle of the blood sacrifice, stating “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). It appears in Deuteronomy 18:15 when Moses tells Israel, “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” It shines out in the promise God made concerning the descendant of David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13: “I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.” And we

hear echoes of that theme in places like Psalm 110:1 where David speaks of his Lord being called to sit on the right hand of Jehovah, and Isaiah 53 where we see the suffering servant who is stricken to save his people from their sins. It is heard in Daniel 7:13-14 where “one like the Son of man” receives an everlasting kingdom from “the Ancient of days,” Micah 5:2 where Bethlehem is stated as the birthplace of the one “that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,” and many other places as well.

All of these echoes and glimpses and expressions bring us directly to the New Testament where that great theme of Christ and salvation is finally and fully revealed. We see it when the Son of Mary is named Jesus because “he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21) and when the shepherds are told “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” because there was born “in the city of David a Saviour, which is

Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11-14). We see it in his teaching like no other (Matthew 7:29; John 7:46), his compassion and dedication (Matthew 9:36-37; Luke 19:10), and the innumerable prophesies he fulfilled (Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; etc). And it is seen in his obedience to the Father (Matthew 26:39), even though it led to his death on the cross (Philippians 2:8), so that he could forgive man’s sin (John 1:29), save his obedient people (Hebrews 5:8-9), fulfill the great promise of Genesis 3:15, and “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

The coming of Jesus Christ and the salvation of mankind is the singular theme that binds all of the Bible together. May we stand in awe of God’s great work, be thankful for his great blessings, and commit ourselves to following his will so that great theme can be applied to us and so we can hear in the end, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).

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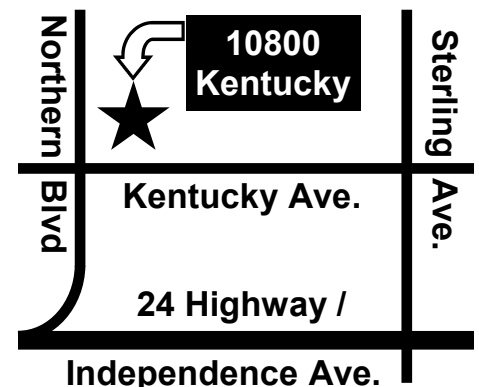
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
05

THE NATURE OF GOD

And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go. (Exodus 5:2)

When Pharaoh asked his famous question, he asked it in defiance. Pharaoh was "god" in Egypt. Now his slaves had come daring to say that *their* God demanded their release. One might imagine Pharaoh reasoning that since Israel's God was unable to deliver them from slavery in the centuries past, they had no possible right to think it would happen when Pharaoh was stronger and Israel was weaker than ever before. But regardless what he did or did not think, one thing is clear: the God of Israel was unlike any "god" Pharaoh had ever known.

Many today are confident that they know who God is. But many today have as little understanding of God as Pharaoh did all those millennia ago. "Who is the LORD?" is a question that all men should ask, because the answer is of vital importance. And few answers are greater

than the facts that he is Eternal, Singular, and Three-Fold.

God is ETERNAL. Unlike the gods of man's imagination, the true God is without beginning or end. God made this clear as he prepared Moses to proclaim the message of deliverance in Exodus 3:14. When Moses asked for God's name, God responded, "I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Here we see the great statement of God's eternal nature. When asked for his name, God simply said, "I AM." At every point in time and *beyond*, God IS. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come..." (Revelation 1:8). This characteristic sets God apart from mankind, all physical life, and even the universe itself. Before the universe existed, God *was* (Genesis 1:1) and after it ends, God *will be* (Psalm 102:25-26), for God is eternal.

God is SINGULAR. Unlike the multitude of gods in mythology, there is only *one* true God. When Jesus was asked in Mark 12:28 which commandment in

the law was greatest, he began his answer by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord." The true God is *one*, and *only* one. "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me" (Isaiah 45:5). Man does not have to please a different god for each aspect of his life. He need only obey this One to be right in his sight (Matthew 7:21).

God is THREE-FOLD. While God is one being, he is composed of three distinct personalities. *How this — SEE page 2*

Did You Know?

The unique combination of characteristics that the God of the Bible possess shows he is no myth! The fact that he had no origin (Genesis 1:1), he is eternal (Psalm 90:2), he is the only God (Isaiah 44:6), he genuinely loves and cares for mankind (John 3:16), he was willing to suffer for his creation (Romans 5:6-10), and many more characteristics, when compared to the petty gods of man's creation, prove the One True God is certainly Divine.

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Words Of The Week: Names Of God

The Bible has many different names for God and each of them displays some of the unique characteristics that make God what he is. We will examine four of them below.

God: In the Hebrew Old Testament, *El* refers to the power or strength of God (Psalm 19:1). *Elohim* is simply the plural form of *El*. The plural emphasizes God's strength even more (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). In the Greek New Testament, *theos* simply means a deity, but is most often used of the One True God (John 1:1-2; 3:16; 4:24).

LORD / Jehovah: The Hebrew word *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*) refers to God's self-existent nature—the fact that he is the great "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14). It is the most common Hebrew name for God, is used exclusively of the True God, and is often translated "LORD" with all upper-case letters. There is no Greek equivalent.

Lord: *Adonai* is the Hebrew term for "sovereign" and shows God's authority. When referring to God, it is usually translated as a mixed capital "Lord" (Genesis 18:27). The Greek equivalent is *kurios*, which refers to supremacy, especially of a lord or master, and is used to show God's authority and power (Matthew 7:21; Revelation 19:16).

Almighty: The Hebrew word *Shaddai* simply means the "most powerful" and is used to show God's omnipotence (Exodus 6:3). In the New Testament, *pantokrator* literally means "all-powerful" and shows the same characteristic of God (Revelation 1:8).

FROM page 1 — can be the case has been debated by men for thousands of years. But the fact that it *is* the case is established by Scripture. This fact is first hinted at in the beginning when God said, "Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness" (Genesis 1:26). It was seen at Jesus' baptism in when, "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17). It is seen in the fact that Jesus is *both*

the "I AM" (John 8:58) *and* the Son of God (John 3:16); that he was fully *God* (Philippians 2:5-6) and yet submitted to the will of his *Father* (Matthew 26:39). And it is most clearly seen in the simple proclamation of John 1:1-2, 14: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

God is eternal, God is singular, and God is three-fold. By these three, the One True God is forever set apart from the ranks of man-made deity.

THREE OMNIS

Omnis is a prefix that means "universally" or "all." Thus omnivores eat all things and omnidirectional microphones pick up sound from all directions. When combined with other words, it can describe the "universal" characteristics of God: his omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

God is OMNIPRESENT. In man-made religions, gods are tied to specific places. Thus the Greek gods dwelled on Mount Olympus, the Babylonian gods resided in the temple ziggurats, and that pattern repeated throughout the world. Each nation had its own gods limited to specific geographic locations. But the true God is present in *all* places at *all* times. Psalm 139:7-10 illustrates this clearly: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [the grave], behold, thou art

there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Why could the author not escape? Because God is everywhere at all times. Solomon understood this fact even as he dedicated God's temple in 1 Kings 8:27: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" He understood God could not be limited to a single location because he is everywhere. It is God's omnipresence that gives man confidence in the promise "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

God is OMNISCIENT. When *omni* is combined with *science* (Latin for "knowledge") the result is omniscience—universal or complete knowledge. God's omniscience is partly because of his omnipresence. "The eyes of the

LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). Hebrews 4:13 says, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Because God is *everywhere*, he is able to *observe* and therefore *know* all things. But his knowledge also extends to what no human eye can see: the deepest secrets of the heart. Thus Scripture says "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Indeed, God's omniscience is one of the most important motivators for right living, for God will judge every person based on a perfect knowledge of each life (2 Corinthians 5:10).

God is OMNIPOTENT. The *potency* of a thing indicates its strength or power. We use the term to refer to how powerful medicines or poisons are. When combined with *omni*, it refers to the fact that God has all power.

This was demonstrated clearly "in the beginning" when "God created the heaven and the earth" out of nothing (Genesis 1:1). Thus "the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). Such power is truly amazing and limitless. As Revelation 1:8 states, he is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending...which is, and which was, and which is to come, **the Almighty.**" God is omnipotent, and this has great and terrible implications. It means terrible things for those who oppose him: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). But it means great things to those who stand with him: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

God is a God of many characteristics, but it only takes these three to show the universal nature of his greatness: God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent.

FIVE KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The study of God's characteristics would take more than a lifetime. But no such study would be complete without examining his holiness, love, mercy, grace, and justice.

God is a God of HOLINESS. *Holy* means "sacred" or "morally pure." God's holiness reflects his purity and separation from sin. He is so holy, the inhabitants of heaven are described as crying day and night, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (Revelation 4:8). It is

his holy nature—free from sin and impurity—that required the sacrifice of Jesus so that mankind could be pure as well. Without that, we could never have a relationship with him, for "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:5-6). That is why we must strive to fulfill the great charge of God: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

— SEE page 4

The Bible Quiz

1. What hides God's face from man?
2. Who did God kill because he touched the ark?
3. Who was swallowed by a great fish?
4. What has the fool said in his heart?
5. Whose donkey spoke?
6. What was the apostle Paul's original name?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. An understanding heart (1 Kings 3:9)
2. 66
3. OT 39, NT 27
4. Return them to their master (Deuteronomy 23:15-16)
5. Peter's wife's mother (Matthew 8:14)
6. 40 years (1 Chronicles 29:27)

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FROM page 3 —

God is a God of LOVE. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Such love is beyond human comprehension. Men are reluctant to give their lives for others, even if those others are good. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). When we were his enemies because of our sin, God loved. When we were most unlovable, God loved. Why? Because, as 1 John 4:8 says, "God is love."

God is a God of MERCY. *Mercy* is pity or compassion extended to one in need. In Exodus 34:6, God described himself as "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." The penitent writer of Psalm 51:1 appealed to that trait: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." God's wonderful mercy is seen many times, but none is greater

than the mercy he showed in giving his Son so that sinful men could be reunited with him: "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:10).

God is a God of GRACE. *Grace* simply means "favor," especially that which is neither earned nor deserved. God's grace is seen in the fact that though "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," God still made it possible for all to be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24). Because of sin we were separated from him. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

God is a God of JUSTICE. Many forget God's justice, but he is still "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). Be-

cause "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), God's justice could not overlook sin. But his other characteristics would not have been satisfied by merely destroying sinful man. So God gave his Son "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9) and thereby satisfy all of his characteristics. However, that does not mean his great gift is a license to sin (Romans 6:1-2). He has "created" us "unto good works" and "ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10) and his justice *will* hold us accountable for how we respond (Romans 2:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 7:21-23).

Because of his *holiness*, God could not fellowship sinful man. But because of his *love* and his desire to extend *mercy*, God showed his *grace* by sending his Son to die in our place and thus satisfy his *justice*. For all this, we must say as the Psalmist long ago, "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3).

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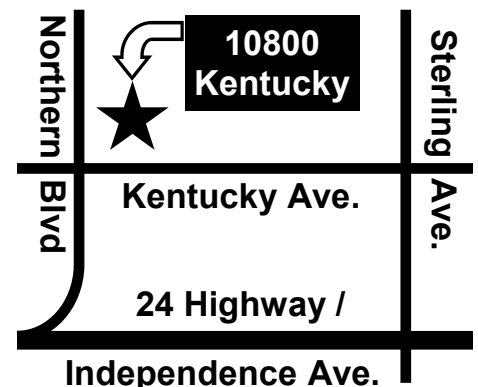
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
06

OUR CONDITION: SIN & ITS CONSEQUENCES

Does sin exist? The world we live in increasingly says, "No!" Nothing is right or wrong, true or false. Everything is simply a shade of gray. Unfortunately, this way of thinking has become so prevalent that even some who claim to be "Christians" now echo similar ideas. "We can't really know truth," they say. "We can't say what is right and wrong, and thus it doesn't matter what we believe!" But regardless of what *men* say, sin *does* exist and its effects on the lives of mankind are dramatic.

Unlike modern man, God is clear about what sin is. The Greek word for *sin* is *hamartia*. It comes from *hamartano* which Strong's Concordance defines as "properly to *miss* the mark." But what is "the mark" and how can man miss it? We find more information in 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The Greek word for *transgressing the law* is *anomia*, which literally means "without law." In both the American Standard and New King James versions, the word is translated "lawlessness." Thus sin (missing the mark)

equals lawlessness (being without law); sin is when we are acting lawlessly, or transgressing (breaking) God's law.

When God makes a law (a rule by which we should live), man is obligated to obey it. When man fails to do so, he transgresses the law, breaks the law, misses the mark, etc. In short, he fails to reach the target or goal that God has set. That in turn has very serious consequences. As we have previously discussed, God is a God of justice. He demands that all men do right. In addition, his holy and sinless nature requires man to be holy before he can have a relationship with God. Quoting from Leviticus 11:44-45, 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." When man steps out of holy obedience into lawless sin, he steps out of salvation and "earns" condemnation. "For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). When a human being sins, those sins separate him from a holy, pure, and just God. "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his

ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). The sins of the children of Israel (their failure to live up to God's standard) had separated them from him. In that state, God refused to have the relationship with them that they desperately needed. As a consequence, they were lost. This concept is clearly seen in 1 John 1:5-6. "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and — SEE page 2

Did You Know?

Sin cannot be inherited!
Many believe in "Original Sin" inherited from Adam, but such is not found in Scripture. If children are not guilty of their father's sins (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20), if unborn children have done neither "good or evil" (Romans 9:11), if sin is a result of *personal* desire (James 1:13-15), and if we will be judged based on the things done in our *own* bodies (2 Corinthians 5:10), then sin cannot be inherited.

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Words Of The Week: Names Of Jesus

As with God, the Bible uses several different names for Jesus. Understanding these names helps us better understand the character of Jesus himself.

Jesus: The Greek *Iesous* derives from the Hebrew name *Yehoshua* which is a shortened form of *Yehoshua* or "Jehovah is salvation." This is the name Joseph was told to use in Matthew 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" Thus, the use of this name emphasizes that Jesus is the savior of mankind.

Anointed / Messiah / Christ: The Hebrew word *Messiah* means "anointed" and refers to the practice of pouring oil on a priest or king (Exodus 28:41; 1 Samuel 10:1). It came to mean one who was chosen, especially by God (Daniel 9:24-26). In the Greek New Testament, *Christos* has the same meaning and refers to the Son of God who was anointed (chosen) by God (Matthew 16:16; Acts 2:36). One should note that "Christ" is not Jesus' last name, but is instead a statement of his selection by God.

Immanuel / Emmanuel: The Hebrew word *Immanuel* means "God with us" and the Greek word *Emmanuel* comes directly from the Hebrew. It was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 as the name of the one born to a virgin. This prophecy was fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23 at the birth of Jesus. Its use shows that God is with mankind, not only in the sense of salvation, but also in the literal truth that Jesus is God in the flesh (John 1:1-2, 14).

FROM page 1 — declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Thus we see that a holy God, who is as pure and holy as light itself, cannot have a relationship with a man who is stained with the shadows and darkness of sin.

This problem of sin has existed since the beginning. When Adam and Eve sinned in Eden, God's justice and holiness required that they be shut out of the Garden. Where once they were able to walk in the presence of God, now they were condemned to spiritual

and physical death by their disobedience (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24). This same process continues today. When we sin, that same spiritual condemnation and separation occurs, and we too are "cast out" of the presence of a holy and just God. And this problem of sin will last as long as the world endures. As long as we sin, determine to miss the mark God has set, and choose to live lawless, rebellious lives, we will be separated from God.

Yet even in the midst of such deep gloom a light shines forth, for God in his mercy and love was not content to let us remain in that state.

OUR CURE: THE DEATH AND SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

On the surface, the outlook for mankind is bleak. God is holy: he cannot tolerate sin (1 John 1:5-6). God is just: he cannot allow sin to go unpunished (Deuteronomy 32:4). Thus, when man sins, he is lost—that sin separates him from God and "earns" the ultimate punishment of spiritual death (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23). But that is not the end of the story, for we know that God is also a God of mercy, grace, and love—he wants to have a relationship with his creation (1 John 4:8; Matthew 23:37). How then can these two seemingly opposite sides of God's nature be brought together and reconciled? They can, by the death of Jesus Christ!

The story of the gospel is a story of love, forgiveness, and mercy. But it is also the story of how God in his infinite wisdom found a way to satisfy his eternal and infinite justice and save mankind at the same time. The underlying principle was first revealed in

Leviticus 17:11. There, when telling Israel why they were not allowed to eat blood, God said, "I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Israel could not eat the blood because the blood, in sacrifice, played an important part in forgiveness: it was the blood that made the atonement or, literally translated, "covered" the sin. Man's sin deserved death, but man's swift and immediate death did not fit with God's love. Thus God allowed a *substitute* death to occur: the sinless animal died the death that the sinful man deserved. In this way, both God's mercy and his justice were satisfied.

But there was a problem in the system of animal sacrifice: it could not fully deal with the problem of sin. As Hebrews 10:4 states, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away

sins." No unthinking, unconscious, unwilling animal could ever fully atone for the sins of a thinking, conscious, willing man. The solution to this problem was Jesus Christ.

While Jesus was fully God, he was also fully human. He lived in this world and knew hunger (Matthew 4:2), weariness (John 4:6), sorrow (John 11:35), and pain (1 Peter 2:21) just like any other human being. And like every human being he faced the temptation to sin and violate God's law. But unlike other human beings, he withstood all temptation and "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22). "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

It was this sinless humanity that made the salvation of mankind possible. Because Jesus was completely human, he was able to make a willing substitution for his fellow man, and because he was sinless, God could accept his death as a substitute for the death that his fellow man "earned." Because

he had no sins of his own, he could "bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28). "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6). As 1 Peter 2:24 states, he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." In that way he was able to become "the propitiation (*atonement; reconciliation*) for our sins" (1 John 2:2) and "by the grace of God... taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

In his sacrificial death, Jesus made it possible for a holy and just God to be reunited with the sinful men that he desired to love and show mercy to. And by that death, he fulfilled the great promise announced at his birth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

The Bible Quiz

1. What was Abraham's original name?
2. What was the name of Moses' wife?
3. How many people is God's grace available to today?
4. Who came to Solomon to test his wisdom?
5. What was the original name of Jerusalem?
6. What was the name of the demons Jesus cast into the swine?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Sin (Isaiah 59:2)
2. Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:7)
3. Jonah (Jonah 1:17)
4. There is no God (Psalm 14:1)
5. Balaam's (Numbers 22:28)
6. Saul (Acts 13:9)

CAN ALL MEN BE SAVED?

Since the death of Jesus provides the cure for sin, the answer to the question above would seem to be, "Yes!" Yet some say, "No!" for at least three reasons. Let us see what the Bible says about each.

Because of PREDESTINATION. Some argue that God has determined certain individuals will be lost no matter what they do. But the Bible says just the opposite! John 3:16, one of the most well known verses in Scripture,

proves this in its opening phrase: "For God so loved **the world**..." 1 John 2:2 says Jesus "is the propitiation [*atonement*]...for the sins of **the whole world**." Though not everyone *will* take advantage of it, Jesus' sacrifice was made for the *whole* world. Why? Because God's desire is clear: he wants "all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore, he will never *force* anyone to be lost.

— SEE page 4

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FROM page 3 —

Because I am not GOOD ENOUGH. Some argue that they themselves cannot be saved because they are not "good enough." They recognize the sin in their lives and believe they cannot live up to God's standards. But this idea misses the larger point that *no one* can be "good enough"! *All* "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The result of sin is "death" (Romans 6:23). Thus, "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). But that is the point of the gospel! God knew our failures and he loved us anyway. "But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We will never be "good enough" to save ourselves. We are what we are "by the grace of God" (1 Corinthians 15:10). And that wonderful grace has "appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11)—even if they do not feel "good enough"!

Because I am TOO BAD. This argument is made by those who believe they have committed

a sin (or sins) so terrible that God could never forgive them. But this idea does not fit with the Bible either.

First, if there were a sin so large that God could not forgive it, then God's power would be limited—his grace would be weaker than the sin! But such is never the case because "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). God's grace is always greater and more powerful than any sin.

Second, we can see examples of people who did terrible things but were forgiven. Paul "made havoc of the church" (Acts 8:3), imprisoned Christians (Acts 8:3), testified to put some to death (Acts 26:10), and "compelled" others to blaspheme (Acts 26:11). Yet even this "chief" of sinners was saved by the one who "came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). At Corinth, some had previously engaged in fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and other sins, but now were "washed," "sanctified," and "justified" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) If Paul and

the Corinthians could be forgiven, all men can!

Third, consider Jesus' crucifixion. As he looked down on those who drove the nails into his hands and feet or stood mocking as he suffered, he did not curse them. Instead he lovingly prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). They would still have to repent, but the application is clear: if Jesus was willing to forgive those standing there on that day, no sin is so dark or so deep that it cannot be made right by the God of love.

The beautiful message of the gospel is that all men, regardless of what they have done, can be forgiven. No predestination, lack of goodness, or depth of badness can keep anyone from answering the great call of the gospel: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

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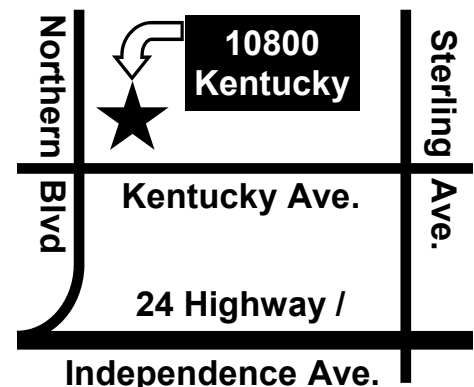
— Services & Times —

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Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
07

WILL ALL MEN BE SAVED?

AS we have clearly seen from Scripture, the wonderful message of the gospel is that everyone *can* be saved! God is not a "respector of persons" (Acts 10:34). He is not prejudiced against any person or group. He wants "all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4), and his marvelous grace which makes salvation possible has "appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Thus, any man or woman who *desires* to be right with God *can* be right with God. For that, all men should echo the words of 2 Corinthians 9:15: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

But even as one rejoices in God's mercy, he must also ask a very serious question: Is the *opportunity* of salvation the same as its *reality*? In other words, simply because all men *can* be saved, does that mean all men *will* be?

There are some in the religious world who teach this very thing, namely that God's grace and love are so great that eventually everyone will be accepted by him—in the end, all men will be given the great blessing of salvation. While this may be a

comforting idea, it is not one that comes from God. The Bible is very clear that not only can men be *saved*, they can also be *lost* as well. The terms "saved" and "lost" indicate this very fact themselves. Peter told the audience on Pentecost "save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40), Cornelius was told what he needed to do to "be saved" (Acts 11:14), and the jailor in Philippi asked, "What must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30). These are only three of the 57 uses of the word "saved" in the New Testament. But what would the use of "saved" mean if those being addressed could not also be "lost"? The fact is that both are equally possible for mankind.

The Bible is clear: just as some will be "saved" in heaven at the end of time, others will be "lost" in hell. Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19:10) but many reject his salvation and as a result will find themselves separated from him in eternity. Jesus says that some will be told, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). 2 Thes-

salonians 1:9 says such individuals "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." In the final judgment, Jesus will say to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41) and they "shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). The image painted in Revelation 20:14-15 is both graphic and clear: "And death and hell were

— SEE page 2

Did You Know?

*The only "faith only" in Scripture has a "not" in front of it! The Greek word for "faith" (pistis) is used more than 240 times in the New Testament. But in all those many uses, only one verse puts the words "faith" and "only" together. Concluding a discussion on the essential nature of obedient works, James 2:24 states simply, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only.**" The point: "faith only" *cannot* save!*

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Grace"

Grace is one of those words that is popular to talk about, but is far too often misunderstood. It is first used in Genesis 6:8 where Noah found "grace" before God. The Hebrew word simply means graciousness, kindness, or favor. It was used of God and of individuals, such as when Jacob sent gifts to Esau in order to find "grace" in his sight (Genesis 32:5; 33:8, 10). In the New Testament, grace occurs more than 130 times and is the word *charis* which means almost the same as its Hebrew counterpart.

Grace is often defined as unmerited favor, or favor that has not been earned. More specifically, it is the favor that God showed by extending salvation to sinful mankind (Titus 2:11). We cannot earn grace by works of the Old Law (Galatians 2:21) or personal merit (Ephesians 2:8-9).

And yet, grace is not *completely* divorced from our action. It cannot be used as an excuse to sin (Romans 6:1-2). It teaches us to live godly lives (Titus 2:11-12). Even though we are saved by grace we are still expected to "walk" in the "works" that God demands (Ephesians 2:10). We can fall from it if we go back to the Old Law (Galatians 5:4). And the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23-35 shows that even after God has given us his grace and mercy, he can remove them if we do not live and act as we should.

In short, though we never can *earn* it, God's grace and favor is always dependant on our *obedience* to *his* will (Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:8-9).

FROM page 1 — cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Will *all* men and women be saved? The Bible clearly says they will not.

But the message of Scripture is even more sobering: not only is it *possible* to be lost, the *majority* of men and women *will be*. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus warns his disciples: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many

there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Note that (a) there is a way that leads to destruction, (b) that way is traveled by *many*, and (c) only *few* find and walk in the path that leads to life. Thus, at the end of time only *few* will be saved while *many* will be lost.

Once the fact that men can be lost is fully understood, the good and honest heart turns to the all-important question the Philippian jailor asked centuries ago: "*What must I do to be saved?*"

GRACE OR WORKS?

One of the biggest debates about salvation is whether human beings are saved by grace or saved by works. Some argue men are saved totally and completely by God's grace regardless of what they do or do not do. Others argue men earn their salvation by completing certain works. The debate between these two sides is often strong. But as with all questions of religion, the only important consideration is, "What does the Bible say?"

The Bible clearly teaches that man is saved by *grace*. In Acts 15:11, Peter, discussing why circumcision was not required of the Gentiles, said: "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Thus, Jew and Gentile alike are saved by grace. In Romans 3:23-24, Paul first points out the consequence of sin and then states the solution: "For all have sinned, and

come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Thus, the cure for sin is the great grace of God. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul makes this point exceedingly clear: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Clearly, man is saved by God's grace and not by any human works.

And yet, the Bible teaches just as clearly that man is saved by *works*. Jesus himself 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). Paul wrote by inspiration that God "will render to every man according to his **deeds**" (Romans 2:6) and "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things **done**

in his body, **according to that he hath done**, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Thus, our works will determine where we will spend eternity. In fact, it is "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24).

Thus we seem to have a quandary: How do we reconcile two seemingly incompatible positions? The answer is simple: by realizing that they are not incompatible at all. Though the religious world teaches grace and works are at odds, the Bible teaches they go hand-in-hand. Consider Titus 2:11-12: "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." God has extended his saving grace to everyone. But that grace teaches a reformation of character—an expectation that we live like *God* wants us to live. The same thing can be seen in

the passage most often used to promote salvation by grace alone. As we have seen, Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly proves we are saved by grace: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Yet the train of thought continues into verse 10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before **ordained that we should walk in them.**" Thus, while we are saved by grace and never our *own* works, God still demands that we do the things *he* wants us to do. If we fail to live as he demands, he has every right to remove his great gift of grace and punish us for it.

Thus the answer to the simple question, "grace or works?" is an even simpler, "**BOTH!**" God's unspeakable gift makes it possible to be saved and man's willing obedience demonstrates his thankfulness and thus allows him to be pleasing to God.

"ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED"

When asked, "Does the Bible teach some men will be lost?" most will say, "Yes." But when asked, "Does the Bible teach that *saved* men can be lost?" many will say, "No!" The eternal security of the believer, or "once saved, always saved," is a popular doctrine. But is it what the Bible teaches?

The idea is simple: once saved by God, a man *cannot* lose his salvation, regardless of what he does or does not do. Those who teach this often use one of two

arguments. First, some say salvation is God's right alone. If he directly decides who will be saved and lost, man's ability to change that decision would limit God's sovereignty, or absolute control. Second, some point to specific verses that teach the saved cannot be taken away from God. In John 10:28, Jesus said of his followers, "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Romans 8:38-39 states, "neither death,

— SEE page 4

The Bible Quiz

1. Who betrayed Samson to the Philistines?
2. Is it possible to fall from grace?
3. What three feasts were all Israelite males required to attend?
4. Who was Ahab's wife?
5. How many men does God want to be saved?
6. What are the first and last books of the New Testament?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Abram (Genesis 17:5)
2. Ziporah (Exodus 2:21)
3. All (Titus 2:11)
4. The queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1)
5. Jebus (1 Chronicles 11:4)
6. Legion (Mark 5:9)

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FROM page 3 — nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." If this is the case, it is argued, then a saved person can never be lost.

But there is a problem: many Bible verses teach a saved person *can* be lost. In Luke 8:13, Jesus describes those, "which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." Though their joy and belief are genuine, they still fall away. Hebrews 3:12 states: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Why would this warning be necessary if brethren *cannot* fall? The answer must be that they *can*. And they can also *return*. Notice James 5:19-20: "Brethren, if any of you do err

from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." If *brethren* can leave truth, be "converted" back, and thereby have their souls saved from death, they must have been lost while they erred. But the clearest text may be Galatians 5:4. Addressing those who considered going back to the Old Law, Paul states, "whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." If one is "fallen from grace," he was once in it, for it is impossible to fall from a place one has never been. And if one falls from God's grace, he is *lost*, for no man can ever be saved without it.

How then do we harmonize the fact that the saved *cannot* be "plucked" away with the idea that they *can* be lost? The answer is found in 1 Corinthians 10. In verse 12, the Christians are warned of the reality that they can fall:

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." But Paul continues in verse 13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Here is the answer to the dilemma. Men *can* fall away from God, but God provides everything needed to "escape" such a fate—he will let nothing *force* a man to leave him. But neither does he *force* a man to take the "way" he provides. God lets man *choose* which path he will take.

Herein lies the great blessing and the great challenge to all men. God stands unshakably on our side, but he leaves it to us to stand on *his*. Fail, and we are lost; succeed and we are saved. Therefore, let each constantly heed the great words of 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."

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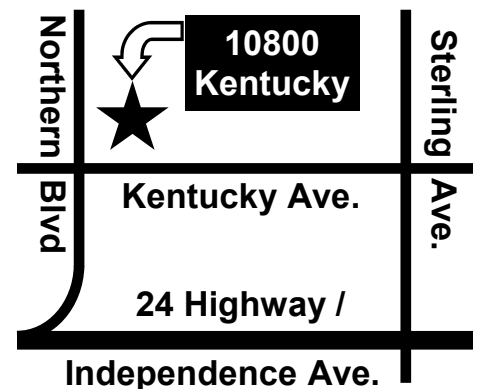
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
08

HEAR & BELIEVE

In all of history there can be no greater question for mankind to answer than the simple question asked by the Jerusalem multitudes in Acts 2:37, by the Philippian jailor in Acts 16:30, and by innumerable men and women throughout time: "What must I do to be saved?" The answer from God's Word is clear: man must take five steps to *become* saved, and one more to *remain* saved.

The first step of salvation is HEARING. Though some claim hearing is not important, the Bible leaves no doubt that hearing the gospel message is absolutely essential. One of the best passages for seeing this fact is Romans 10:13-17. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath

believed our report? **So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** Thus, without hearing the word of God, one can never have the faith that God requires.

To fully understand and believe as they should, men and women need to hear that mankind was lost in sin and separated from God (Romans 3:23; 6:23), that God, because of his great love, sent his Son to save mankind (Romans 5:6-8), and that if they obey his will, all men can be saved (Acts 10:34-35). In short, every man and woman must hear "the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

After hearing, one must take **the second step of salvation and BELIEVE.** Belief in God is an essential part of pleasing him. "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). In fact, faith is essential in order to access God's saving grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). But this belief must be more

than just a *generic* belief in God. It must also include the *specific* belief that Jesus is his Son. John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Jesus himself said, "...if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Belief is an essential step that man must take after hearing God's word. But contrary to popular teaching, belief alone is not enough. In order for belief to save, it must — *SEE page 2*

Did You Know?

The steps of salvation show everyone can be saved! Outside of children and the mentally disabled who are not guilty because they have not sinned (Matthew 18:3-4; Romans 9:11), these steps of salvation are within the ability of every human being! There are no monetary requirements, no ancestry requirements, no complicated pilgrimage requirements, etc. In short, the simplicity of the steps show salvation is open to all!

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Baptism"

Few things in the Bible are as misunderstood as the concept of baptism, especially its *form*. Some argue baptism can be a sprinkling or pouring while others state it must be immersion. As is usually the case, *men* disagree, but *the Bible* is abundantly clear.

"Baptize" comes directly from the Greek word "*baptidzo*." Strong's defines it as "to *make whelmed* (that is, *fully wet*)" and Thayer's adds "1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge... 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe." Thus by definition alone, baptism is neither a sprinkling nor a pouring, but a complete immersion.

This fact can also be seen in various passages in Scripture. John the Baptist baptized "in Aenon near to Salim, because there was **much** water there" (John 3:23). Why would he need *much* water, if pouring or sprinkling were sufficient? Because *Biblical* baptism requires *full immersion*—and *that* requires "much" water! This is why Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch in "**certain** water"—water deep enough that "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36-38). This is how Romans 6:4 can declare "we are **buried** with him by baptism." How can sprinkling or pouring ever be considered a "burial?" They cannot.

Thus, full immersion is the only "form" of baptism that ever has or ever will meet the Biblical standard laid out by God.

FROM page 1 — be put into action. While some deny this, verses such as those found in James chapter 2 make this point inescapably clear: "Even so **faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone**" (17); "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead also**" (26); "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only**" (24). Faith alone will *never* save! Though no

man will ever be able to stand before God and boast about his works (Ephesians 2:9), man's works are still essential in order to fulfill God's will (Ephesians 2:10) and make faith "perfect" (James 2:22).

Thus the belief that resides in the heart *must* be translated into acts of obedience in order to be pleasing to God. And it is obedience that leads to the next steps of salvation.

REPENT & CONFESS

Once an individual has heard the gospel and believed in Jesus, he must go on to **the third step of salvation and REPENT**.

The Greek word for "repent" is *metanoeo*, which means "to think differently" or "reconsider." Simply put, repentance is a change of mind. When one considers the high cost of sin (to himself *and* to Jesus), he will *want* to make whatever changes are necessary in order to be right with God.

The Bible is clear: repentance is *essential*. In Acts 2:37-38, after the first recorded gospel sermon, the audience asked Peter and the other apostles, "What shall we do?" The answer was simple: "**Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for **the remission of sins**." In Acts 17:30, Paul told those who worshipped idols, "the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now **commandeth all men every where to repent**." And Jesus himself stated clearly in Luke 13:3 and 5, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Sorrow will always be a part of repentance, but sorrow alone is not enough. In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." One sorrow leads to repentance while the other does not. What makes the difference? Even though repentance is a change of *mind*, it must lead to a change of *life* in order to be acceptable to God. After listing what the Corinthians had changed in their lives, verse 11 concludes, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." Thus, repentance is an *internal* decision, but *must* include *external* action in order to be approved by God.

Part of that action is the willingness to **take the fourth step of salvation and CONFESS**, or tell others what one believes about Jesus. Up to this point, all of the steps of salvation have been taken *internally*. Confession is the first real step to be made *externally*.

Several passages show both the importance and content of confession. 1 John 4:15 says simply, "Whosoever shall confess that

Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Jesus is even more direct: "**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). No one wants to be denied by Jesus. Therefore everyone must confess their belief in him.

One common misconception about confession is that it involves "the sinner's prayer." This "prayer" is usually said to include accepting Jesus as a personal savior and asking him into one's heart. But there is one problem with "the sinner's prayer": *it is not in the Bible*. No such prayer is stated, recorded, or prayed in

Scripture. *Thus, the sinner's prayer has no Biblical basis.* It is a human invention.

In contrast, Biblical confession is seen several times in scripture, including the simple statement of belief made by the Ethiopian eunuch almost two millennia ago: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and 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 8:36-37).

Having heard, believed, repented, and confessed, the world often stops at this point and proclaims salvation complete. The Bible, however, clearly states that one final step is necessary before becoming a child of God.

The Bible Quiz

1. What are the first two birds mentioned by name in the Bible?
2. How many sons and daughters did Job have?
3. Who was Ishmael's mother?
4. How many sins did Christ commit?
5. Who took the accursed things from Jericho?
6. Who led Israel after Moses?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Delilah (Judges 16:18)
2. Yes (Galatians 5:4)
3. Unleavened Bread (Passover), Weeks (Pentecost), and Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:16)
4. Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31)
5. All (1 Timothy 2:4)
6. Matthew, Revelation

BE BAPTIZED & LIVE FAITHFULLY

Of all the steps discussed thus far, none is as hotly debated as **the fifth step of salvation: BAPTISM**. Yet the Bible is very clear about what baptism is and what it does.

First, Biblical baptism is an **immersion**, not a sprinkling or pouring. The Greek word for "baptism" means "immersion." Baptism is a "burial" (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism required "certain water" that they "went down... into" (Acts 8:36-38). Thus, Biblical baptism is an immersion.

Second, Biblical baptism is **essential** for salvation. While it is true that baptism *by itself* apart from God's grace cannot save, it is also true that God *requires* baptism in order to access his

grace. Baptism is an *essential* part of preaching the gospel (Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 8:35-36). Jesus will only save those in the church (Ephesians 5:23) and baptism is how a person is added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47). Essential items such as "grace" (2 Timothy 2:1), "salvation" (2 Timothy 2:10), all spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3), and many others are found "in" Christ, and baptism is the only way to get "into" Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). Baptism is where the old sinful life dies and men are "raised up" to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-7). Baptism is where sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38). Consider Paul: Even after seeing Jesus on

— SEE page 4

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FROM page 3 — the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-7) and showing his repentance by three days of fasting and prayer (Acts 9:9, 11), when Ananias came to him in Acts 22:16, Paul still had his sins. And how was he told to remove them? "Now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." Regardless of the popular teachings of man, the Bible is still absolutely clear: "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21).

Third, Biblical baptism is only for those who understand and willingly obey. All those who were baptized in the New Testament had heard the gospel (Matthew 28:19), believed in Jesus (Mark 16:16), repented of their sins (Acts 2:38), and confessed their belief in Christ (Acts 8:36-37). Therefore, anyone who has not taken *all* of these steps before baptism, not *understood* them, or not taken them *willingly* has *not* been Biblically baptized. This means that practices such as infant baptism, forced baptism, being baptized for someone else, and any other

man-made ideas are not Scriptural and *cannot* save.

Thus, baptism is essential to salvation. Without it, no man can be saved.

But even after one is added to the church, put into Christ, forgiven, and saved by baptism, there is still one more step to take.

The sixth and final step of salvation is LIVING FAITHFULLY UNTIL DEATH. After one becomes a Christian, he must continue to live the way that God wants him to live. As we have seen previously, even after becoming a Christian, one can still be lost. Galatians 5:4 states that Christians can be "fallen from grace." 1 Corinthians 10:12 tells Christians "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Christians must even be "faithful unto death" in order to receive "a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth **to the end** shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

What if we sin after becoming a Christian? The Bible

teaches that if we sin as Christians, we are to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22) and we will be forgiven. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). Just as in the beautiful parable of the prodigal son, when we return to him as his penitent children, God will take us back (Luke 15:20-24).

God wants all men everywhere to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). He has put the wonderful gospel plan into action and given his Son for our sins. But God also demands, after paying such a high price, that men conform themselves to *his* will in order to be saved. He demands that we **hear** the gospel, **believe** Jesus is God's Son, **repent** of our sins, **confess** our belief in Jesus, **be baptized** to become a Christian, and **live faithfully** for him.

Our refusal to obey God's plan of salvation will lead to eternal damnation. Our obedience will lead to everlasting life. Which will you choose?

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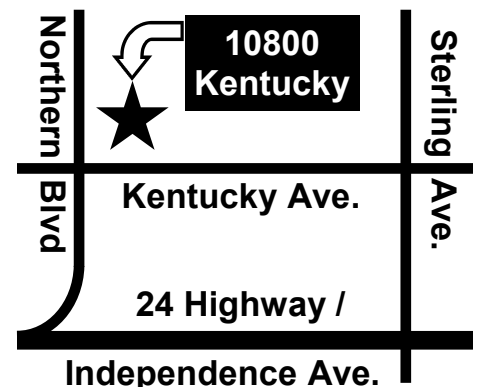
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
09

DENOMINATIONALISM

The idea that thousands of different churches teaching millions of different doctrines are all correct and heading toward heaven is one of the most popular teachings in the religious world today. Denominationalism is the foundation on which almost all modern religious life rests and the one doctrine on which almost every religious group agrees. The only problem is, *it cannot be found in Scripture.*

Denominationalism views the church like a gigantic pie and each denomination as a different "slice." Thus there is one church and each denomination is simply a *part* of it. On the surface this idea may seem grand, but on closer inspection it fails completely. It is true that there is only one church. Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:4, 5:23, and other verses state that fact. But to claim that one church is made up of different denominations is neither Biblical nor logical.

Consider the analogy of the pie: How would it be possible to have one pie composed of hundreds of different "flavors": one slice apple, one rhubarb, one chocolate, one key lime, etc? The reality is that nothing of the

sort could exist. It would be a disgusting jumble of mush that no one would ever eat!

Consider the far more foolish concept of denominationalism. If true, God's one church is composed of wildly different organizations teaching and practicing wildly different things. Think about how much variation exists just on the doctrine of baptism: some say it is absolutely essential, others that it is not necessary at all; some say it can be a sprinkling or pouring, others that it can only be immersion; some say infants can be baptized, others say only individuals old enough to understand and consent can be baptized. And these are all supposed to be "one"? Yet it gets even worse, for such confusion is multiplied by thousands upon thousands of doctrines that are mixed up and thrown together. The result is the confusing, illogical hodgepodge of contradictory teachings and practices that we are told makes up the one true church. This is obvious foolishness.

Scripture takes a very different view. First, the Bible says *nothing* about denominations. Second, such wildly different and

contradictory teachings completely violates the prayer Jesus made to the Father for all believers, "That they all **may be one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, **that they also may be one in us**: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). Third, with so many different groups teaching and practicing different things, they cannot all be following the clear instruction found in Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he** — SEE page 2

Did You Know?

Elders, presbyters, bishops, overseers, episcopates, shepherds, and pastors are all names for just one office! The world often tries to separate these into different offices with different levels of authority, but not the Bible. When Paul spoke to the "elders" (presbyters) in Acts 20:17, he was talking to "overseers" (bishops/episcopates) who were to "feed" (pastor / shepherd) the church (Acts 20:28). See the last article for more detail.

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Church"

The word "church" is an interesting yet misunderstood word. Its proper understanding helps man understand great truths about God's plan.

The English word "church" is used to translate the Greek word *ecclesia*. This word is actually a compound of *ek* (or *ex*), meaning "out" and *kaleo* meaning "to call." Thus, the term properly means "a calling out."

Ecclesia was originally used in Greek democracies where part of the population was "called out" to serve as the government for a period of time and then replaced by a different group of "called out" ones. Over time, *ecclesia* came to refer to the assembly formed by this "calling out" and later was used for various other types of assemblies. Eventually, it came to be used of the church.

Two important facts flow from this understanding of the term *ecclesia*. First, in the Bible, the "church" does not refer to a *building*, but to the group of *individuals* who come together, regardless of the location. Second, just as those in ancient Greece answered the "call" to serve their government, those who are part of God's *ecclesia* are those who have been "called...out of darkness" (1 Peter 2:9). This "call" is neither mysterious or miraculous—it simply refers to the gospel message being preached, heard, and responded to. Thus Paul could tell the Thessalonians that God "called you by our gospel" (2 Thessalonians 2:14). In that same way, men and women are "called out" to become part of his "church" today.

FROM page 1 — **that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.**" Fourth, any teaching that is different from God's teaching is wrong. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Fifth, differences between the denominations is a result of human teaching which is always condemned. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Sixth, only one way leads to heaven, not many. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be

which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Seventh, if all the contradictory denominational doctrines are all true, it would completely violate the principle that "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Only a church patterned after the New Testament church—only a church living, working, doing, and believing as *Scripture* teaches—can ever be the one true church that Jesus will save (Ephesians 5:23). Denominationalism may be a very popular doctrine, but like so many of the teachings in our world today, it cannot be found in the Bible.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

All denominations have their origin in a founding man or group of men. But the one true church is uniquely different: *it was founded by God, and God alone.*

Roughly 500 years before Jesus' birth, Daniel foretold a great kingdom that would be established during the fourth great kingdom: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). Five centuries later, in the age of the Roman Empire, God set his plan in motion: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). That Son came preaching a simple, clear message: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at

hand" (Matthew 4:17). He came making a simple, clear promise: "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). In his death he purchased his church and all who would be part of it "with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Fifty days later, it came into existence when three thousand obeyed the gospel (Acts 2:41) and were "added to the church" by God (Acts 2:41, 47). By their simple act of obedience, they were "delivered...from the power of darkness, and...translated...into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).

That great kingdom has endured ever since. Nations have risen to crush it, false doctrines have threatened to destroy it, sinful men have sought to corrupt it, yet still it endures. Though at times and in places its light has gone dark, in every generation,

when man has forsaken the vain doctrines of his fellow man and with humble heart turned back to the simple "seed" of God's word (Luke 8:11), that church has been replanted and reborn and renewed again, just as it was nearly 2000 years ago.

The one true church is not complicated. It is not some inscrutable mystery men cannot perceive. It is what it has always been: the *ecclesia*. This Greek word for "church" means simply the "called out." All those who have heard the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14) and obeyed it (Romans 6:17) have thereby been "**called...out** of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). These "called out" ones do not become part of a man-made organization, but are part of that great "church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23). They become "members of his body" (Ephesians 5:30), working and striving together to reach that heavenly city "whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

As individuals these men and women wear only the name given

in Scripture: "Christians" (Acts 11:26). And they are part a collective whole that wears only the names given in Scripture. It is the "church," the *ecclesia*, because it is composed of the "called...out" (1 Peter 2:9). It is "the body" because each Christian is a member of it (Colossians 1:18). It is "the church of God" (Galatians 1:13) because *he* created and established it. It is "the house of God,...the church of the living God,...the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) because of its unique and vital nature. And it is the church of Christ (Romans 16:16) because it is *his* church (Matthew 16:18), it is *his* body (Ephesians 5:30), *he* is its head (Ephesians 5:23), and it was *his* blood that purchased it (Acts 20:28).

Through all the long centuries, this one, true church has welcomed all who seek its shelter. It is older than any man-made church or denomination and more valuable than all of them combined, for it is *this* church and *only* this church—the one, true church which belongs to Jesus the Christ—that will be saved by him in the end (Ephesians 5:23).

ORGANIZATION & GOVERNMENT

One of the most important differences between man-made churches and the church of God is in the area of government and organization. Denominations use numerous human inventions—complex hierarchies, priests, synods, councils, earthly headquarters, etc—that are never found in Scripture.

Most human churches have some kind of "head" (a pope,

president, archbishop, etc) that is its leader on earth. But the Bible recognizes only one head, and he resides in heaven. Jesus alone has the right to rule over and make laws for the church because he alone died to purchase it (Acts 20:28) and he alone is "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). "Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23), and Christ alone. Thus, no man can ever be.

— SEE page 4

The Bible Quiz

1. What is the name of the oldest man in the Bible? How old was he?
2. How old was Josiah when he began to reign?
3. How many will appear before the judgment seat of Christ?
4. What are the first and last books of the Old Testament?
5. How many total years did Jacob serve for Rachael?
6. How tall was Goliath?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Raven and dove (Genesis 8:7-8)
2. 7 sons and 3 daughters (Job 1:2)
3. Hagar (Genesis 16:4, 11)
4. None (1 Peter 2:21-22)
5. Achan (Joshua 7:1)
6. Joshua (Joshua 1:1-2)

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FROM page 3 — Outside of Christ, the Bible never refers to any level of organization higher than the local congregation. Each church is autonomous— independent and not under the control of any other body or group. Elders were established in every local congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) but those elders were only told to “feed the flock of God which is **among you**” (1 Peter 5:2). Thus, there are no parishes, dioceses, stakes, wards, synod, or larger organizational structures of any kind in Scripture. Each church is only under Christ’s control and controls nothing beyond itself.

In the New Testament, there are only two offices with specific qualifications: elders and deacons. Elders must meet the qualifications set by God in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Otherwise they cannot be elders. In the Bible, elders are always and only seen in the plural sense—there is no example of one man leading a church by himself. The primary role of the elders is to guide and care for the church they are a part of

(Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2). They do not make new laws for God, but simply strive to uphold God’s will (Titus 1:9). These men have three different Greek names that translate into six English names: *presbuteros* (elder / presbyter) because they are older in age, *poimen* (shepherd / pastor) because they feed the church spiritually, and *episkopos* (overseer / bishop) because they oversee and lead the church. In Acts 20, *elders* (*presbuteros*, v17) are *overseers* (*episkopois*, v28) who are *to feed* (verb of *poimen*, v28) the church. In 1 Peter 5, *elders* (*sum-presbuteros*, v1) are *to feed* (verb of *poimen*, v2) and take the *oversight* (verb form of *episkopois*, v2) of the church. Thus, all of these terms refer to the same single office.

Like elders, deacons must also meet specific qualifications set by God (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Since the name “deacon” means “servant” in Greek, these men do not lead the congregation, but simply assist the elders as needed.

The last organizational level is that of member (1 Corinthians

12:27). Elders and deacons are members as well, but simply have additional responsibilities. It is these members who are the priests in the church of Christ (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6).

What about the preacher? While many human churches elevate the preacher into a leadership position, the Bible never does. The preacher is simply a member of the congregation, working under the oversight of the elders to help feed the church spiritually. He is *not* a “pastor” (*poimen*) because in the Bible that term refers only to an elder. A preacher may serve as an elder, but otherwise he has no more authority in the congregation than any other member.

Unlike man’s vain complexity, God’s truth is clear: a Biblical organization of the church has Jesus as its only head, elders tending and guiding it, deacons assisting the elders, and all the individual members working together make up the local congregation. This simple plan will be the only one used by the church that belongs to Christ.

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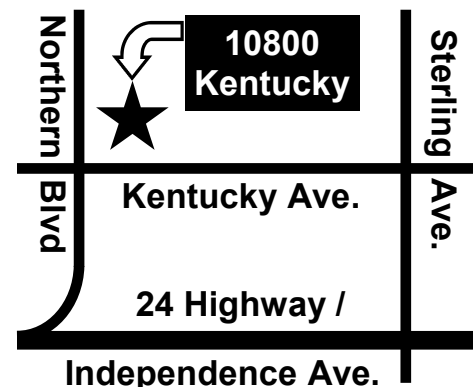
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

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*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

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WORSHIP

Worship is an important part of being right with God, yet many people have no idea what it involves or how essential it truly is.

The English word "worship" is translated from several different Hebrew and Greek words. The Hebrew word most often used is *shachah*, which literally means "to bow down." It is used to show respect (Lot "bowed himself" to strangers—Genesis 19:1) or submission (the sheaves and heavenly bodies representing Joseph's family "made obeisance" to him—Genesis 37:7-10). These ideas are also present when *shachah* is used in connection with "worshipping" God (Genesis 22:4-5; 24:26; Exodus 34:14).

The most common Greek word is *proskuneo* which has a similar meaning and usage. Like *shachah*, its literal meaning refers to bowing down, it was used to show respect or submission (Matthew 18:26; 4:9), and it was used of "worship" to God as well (Matthew 4:10; John 4:24).

By combining these concepts, we can see the Biblical view of

"worship": showing respect toward, submitting to, and, in effect, bowing down before the God who is truly worthy (Psalm 29:1-2; Revelation 5:13-14).

The next question one might ask is, "How does man worship God?" Some teach that all of life is worship—that every act of obedience to God is an instance of submitting to him and thus worshipping him. But while obedience *is* a form of submission that God requires (1 Peter 5:5-6), the Bible indicates that "worship" is more specific. Abraham was obeying God in Genesis 22:5 but said he must "go yonder and worship." The eunuch was reading Isaiah in Acts 8:27-28 but had been "to Jerusalem for to worship." Thus worship seems to involve *specific* actions rather than *general* obedience.

Jesus said righteous worship involves two parts: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). "Spirit" refers to being properly engaged mentally and emotionally, as seen in places like Psalm 5:1-7. "Truth" refers to the fact that what is done must be in accor-

dance with *God's* will. Teaching man's doctrines only produces "vain worship" (Matthew 15:9). Therefore, right worship requires the right attitude and the right actions.

One challenge in worship is no specific action is ever called "worship" in Scripture outside of the literal bowing down itself. However, by considering the aspects involved in worship (respect, submission, bowing down, etc) and examining all the things God requires Christians to do, many have

— SEE page 2

Did You Know?

Cain and Abel's sacrifices in Genesis 4:3-7 show that God has always had specific requirements in worship! The question, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Genesis 4:7), shows that they had been told what God expected. Abel offered what God wanted "by faith" (Hebrews 11:4), but Cain offered what *he* wanted, and was rejected. Why? Because God demands that worship must conform to *his* standard, not man's.

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Communion"

The night of his betrayal, Jesus established the memorial feast called "the Lord's supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20). As one of the most recognizable acts of Christian worship, this meal is extremely significant due to the meaning involved in its common title: "communion."

"Communion" is a translation of the Greek word *koinonia*, which means "partnership" or "participation." It is translated "fellowship" numerous places.

How is the Lord's Supper a "communion"? First, because on the night Jesus established it, he said "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26-29). Since the kingdom has come (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9), Christians partake of a symbolic "fellowship" in that ceremony with Jesus even today.

Second, it represents the fellowship with Jesus made possible by his sacrifice. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16). Thus, the Lord's supper represents Jesus' body and blood "which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-29).

Finally, it is a shared remembrance of that great sacrifice which binds Christians to one another. "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

FROM page 1 — concluded that there are five specific acts of worship: *preaching, praying, giving, singing, and partaking of the Lord's Supper.*

In **PREACHING**, mankind bows himself before God and submits to his message. The preacher seeks to elevate the minds of men upward toward God (Isaiah 55:8-11). This requires preaching the message of God, not man (2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Peter 4:11) even when it may not be popular (2 Timothy 4:2-4). It also requires balance (preaching "all the counsel of God"—Acts 20:27) and dedication by the preacher (1 Timothy 4:16). But those who hear also have an important role. They must "take heed how they hear" (Luke 8:18) by listening with concentration and desire (Matthew 5:6). They must be willing to search "the scriptures" to make sure what they are told is true (Acts 17:11). They must correct any preaching they find is wrong (Acts 18:26; Galatians 2:11). And if their search shows the preaching aligns with truth of God, they must be willing to humble themselves in obedience—not to the will of *man*, but to the will of *God* (Hebrews 5:9; Matthew 7:21).

In **PRAYER**, man bows himself before the very throne of God in a spiritual and often literal way as well. Prayer that is right with God will have several important characteristics outlined in Matthew 6:5-15. It will not be done to be seen of men (Matthew 6:5-6). It must be done with understanding (Matthew 6:7-8; 1 Corinthians 14:14-16). It is directed to the Father (Matthew 6:9) with whom man must have a relation-

ship in order to be heard (John 9:31)—there is *no* Biblical authority to pray to angels or men, living or dead. It must occur with humility (Matthew 6:10)—like the publican in Luke 18:11-14—but should also be bold (Hebrews 4:16), confident (Matthew 7:7), and persistent (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer includes asking for physical and spiritual needs (Matthew 6:11,13), but to receive forgiveness, it must also include a willingness to forgive others (Matthew 6:12, 14-15). Prayers are to be in the name of Jesus, or by his authority (John 14:13-14). No specific posture is required, because in Scripture what matters is not one's physical position but his spiritual condition (1 Peter 3:12).

In **GIVING**, man submits to God in one of the most challenging ways: his personal finances. In Scripture, the church supports itself by contributions from its members (Acts 4:34-35), not through rummage sales, bake sales, garage sales, etc. Giving that follows the Biblical pattern will occur on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). From passages like 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 we learn that giving must be bountiful, purposed (or decided on), personal (the private decision of each individual), cheerful, and willing. Right giving will involve sacrifice as well (Luke 21:1-4). However, God does not demand of us more than we can do (2 Corinthians 8:13-15)—families must be supported and bills must be paid (1 Timothy 5:8; Romans 13:8). Those under the Law of Moses were required to give a tithe, or 10% (Numbers 18:21), but in the New Testament the

only amount required is the simple yet challenging standard of 1 Corinthians 16:2: "as God hath prospered him." God calls on each one to determine how much he has benefited from and how much he will return to God.

In **SINGING**, we worship by offering "the fruit of our lips" as a "sacrifice of praise to God" (Hebrews 13:15). Right singing will involve the proper attitude and understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15). It can be an individual action (James 5:13), but when it occurs in the church, all must be involved in "teaching and admonishing one another" (Colossians 3:16) and "making melody in" their hearts (Ephesians 5:19). New Testament singing never involved choirs or mechanical instruments. Historically, these inventions were not introduced until *hundreds* of years later. Thus, those who seek to please God and be part of his one true church today will reject these human innovations and use only the vocal and congregational music found in Scripture.

In the **LORD'S SUPPER** (or Communion) a Christian remembers Jesus' great sacrifice by partaking of the bread that represents his body and the fruit of the vine that represents his blood (Matthew 26:26-29). These items are unleavened and non-alcoholic because the Lord's Supper was established on Passover when leaven of any kind was forbidden (Exodus 12:14-19). A Christian must partake in a "worthy" manner—remembering Jesus' great sacrifice—or he "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28-29). And the Christian will partake every Sunday because the example set in Acts 20:7 is that "upon the first day of the week... the disciples came together to break bread."

Preaching, praying, giving, singing, and the *Lord's Supper* are essential parts of New Testament Christianity. These are the ways Christ's church bowed itself and worshipped God in the first century. And these are the ways that Christ's church bows itself and worships God even today.

The Bible Quiz

1. What city was Jonah sent to preach to?
2. What are the three categories of sin in the world?
3. How will the day of the Lord come?
4. Who were Moses' parents?
5. When did the 1st century disciples gather to break bread?
6. How many people were saved on the ark?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Methuselah, 969 years old (Genesis 5:27)
2. 8 (2 Kings 22:1)
3. All (2 Corinthians 5:10)
4. Genesis and Malachi
5. 14 (Genesis 29:20, 25-27, 30)
6. 6 cubits and a span (9 feet, 9 inches—1 Samuel 17:4)

WORKS OF THE CHURCH

Beyond worship, there are at least three areas of work that the church is to be involved in: *evangelism, benevolence,* and *edification*.

EVANGELISM derives from the Greek word for "gospel": *euangelion*, or "good message." The fundamental purpose of the church is to spread the wonderful gospel of Christ throughout the world and thereby save the souls of men. This was Jesus' primary

objective: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). It was the primary command he left for his disciples: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Therefore, evangelism is the primary function of the church: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be

— SEE page 4

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FROM page 3 — known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10). Notice also that evangelism is a work of the *church*, not simply the preachers or elders. In Acts 8, as the apostles remained in Jerusalem (v1), it was all the other members who "went every where preaching the word" (v4). *Every* Christian has the responsibility to teach the gospel when and where he can.

BENEVOLENCE in its simplest form means "kindness" or "goodness." In connection to the church, it refers to the deeds done to help those in need. Jesus set the example in benevolence. Numerous times he was "moved with compassion" to heal the sick, (Matthew 9:35-36; 14:14; 15:30-31), to provide food (Matthew 14:16-21; 15:32-38), or to do other acts of kindness. The church follows his example by providing for Christians in need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35), including widows (Acts 6:1-5), orphans (James 1:27), and even needy saints in other congregations

(Acts 11:29; Romans 15:26). This willingness to show benevolence also extends to those outside of the church, as illustrated by the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the great admonition to "do good unto all men" (Galatians 6:10).

It is important to note that, unlike some today, Jesus did not focus exclusively on benevolence. He understood that while benevolence could have an important impact, the preaching of the gospel always takes precedence, for "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

EDIFICATION literally refers to "house building." In the church, it carries the idea of building up and strengthening one another. Edification includes all of the things the church does to encourage Christians to remain faithful. When the church is what it should be, this occurs as naturally as in a physical body: "From whom the whole body

fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Edification takes work. Sometimes, it involves being careful to choose words that build up rather than tear down (Ephesians 4:29). Sometimes it involves "bearing" those who are weak (Romans 15:1-2). And sometimes it involves correcting those in error so that they can be strengthened and right once again (Galatians 6:1). In all things, it involves following the pattern of the Thessalonians: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

By using *evangelism*, *benevolence*, and *edification* as it should, the church will be "built up" to be "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

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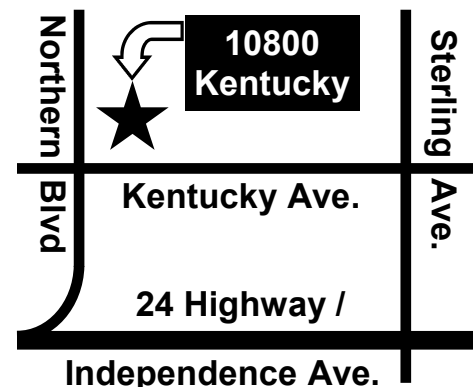
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KNOW THE TRUTH

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11

WHAT A CHRISTIAN MUST LEAVE BEHIND

Becoming a Christian is a life-changing event. Not only is one's relationship with God repaired, but his way of life is fundamentally altered. He must now strive to live in harmony with God's will, for he is no longer his own—he is "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Sometimes this change seems easy. Some are like Timothy, preceded by several faithful generations (2 Timothy 1:5) and taught the Bible "from a child" (2 Timothy 3:15). But even these have changes to make, for God "commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Such repentance is difficult, even for those like Timothy.

Sometimes a person is raised in a religion that is right in many areas but wrong in others. This person may not require a massive lifestyle change to become faithful, but just like with Timothy, such changes *must* occur. Apollos was very sincere in his preaching about Jesus (Acts 18:24-26), but he was not right for he knew "only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25). When Aquila and Priscilla taught him "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26), he had to choose to change and follow God or remain

as he was. Apollos made that change willingly, and went on to serve God in great ways (Acts 18:27-28).

Sometimes the transition to Christianity seems more difficult. Sometimes individuals are so thoroughly dedicated to a lifestyle that becoming a Christian would require a radical alteration. Some are completely wrapped up in the wickedness of the world while others are sincerely trying to follow religious teachings that completely reject the Bible. For these individuals, the changes required might seem so large as to be impossible. Yet even those who appear furthest away can change. Paul is an excellent example. Beginning with the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:58, he was so completely dedicated to stamping out Christianity that he "made havoc of the church" (Acts 8:3), helping to put some to death and forcing others to blaspheme (Acts 26:10-11). He did all of these things in "good conscience" believing they were *right* to do (Acts 23:1). But on the road to Damascus, he realized his error and had to make a choice: continue to defy God or change. Paul chose to change and the cost was high. He lost all of the

friendships, prestige, and power he had acquired. He had to abandon what he previously believed and practiced (Philippians 3:4-14). But he also gained something far more valuable: a right relationship with God.

Becoming a Christian is not always easy, but it can and must be done. Once the decision has been made to obey God, the next step is obvious: certain things must be removed from our lives and certain things must be added. Let us first examine some of the things to remove.

Did You Know?

The Bible says there are things you have to kill! In Colossians 3:5, Christians are told to "mortify" certain characteristics. The Greek word here is *nekroō*, which Thayer's defines as "to make dead..." And what are these characteristics that must be "killed off"? The verse continues: "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness." In other words, Christians must kill the things that cause spiritual death!

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Words Of The Week: "Cast Off"

In Romans 13:12 we find an important phrase: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore **cast off** the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." "**Cast off**" comes from the Greek word *apotithemi*, which means "to put away." Its eight uses in Scripture show clearly that there are certain things Christians *must* "cast off" to be pleasing to God.

Acts 7:58 helps us better understand this term. There some "**laid down** (*apotithemi*) their clothes" at the feet of Saul—they took off their outer garments and laid them aside. In the same way, Christians must "lay down" their sins to please God.

Christians are *generically* called to "**put off**...the old man"—the old, sinful way of living—(Ephesians 4:22), "**lay aside** every weight, and...sin" (Hebrews 12:1), and "**lay apart** all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" (James 1:21). Christians are also called to remove *specific* actions. They must be "**putting away** lying" (Ephesians 4:25), must "**put off**...anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication" and "lie not" (Colossians 3:8-9), and must be "**laying aside** all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings" (1 Peter 2:1).

In short, though the world may teach that Christians do not need to make any changes in their lives, the use of *apotithemi* says the exact opposite. Christians *must* "cast off" all those things that God says are wrong in order to be pleasing to him!

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, DRUGS, & ADDICTION

One of the most common changes is in regard to addiction, especially alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. While the Bible only specifically names alcohol, the principles it lays out applies to *all* drugs.

First, their effects are destructive to self, both physically and spiritually. Proverbs 23 contains many warnings. Verse 21 states "the drunkard... shall come to poverty." Verse 29-32 warns of the physical affects, including "it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Perhaps saddest of all is verse 35: "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." How many have found themselves caught in this sad trap, be it to alcohol or another drug? But even worse is the effect on one's spiritual life. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 clearly teaches that drunkards "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Second, they destroy a Christian's good example. There is no way to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mathew 5:16) while holding on to alcohol, tobacco, or any other drug.

Third, they serve no purpose other than satisfying a physical, fleshly lust. But a Christian is required to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Fourth, all such are addicting—they bring individuals under their control. But a Christian must "not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Failure to bring one's body "into subjection" will lead to being "a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Fifth, no righteous reason can be given for using them. Desire is invalid (1 Peter 2:11), social conformity is never acceptable (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), and stubborn, willful pride is always evil (Matthew 7:22-23).

Sixth, one's own advice will condemn them. If asked by a child or friend about partaking, the honest answer will always be, "Don't!" But warning or forbidding another yet partaking oneself makes one guilty of hypocrisy. He becomes like the scribes and Pharisees who "say, and do not" (Matthew 23:1-4).

Seventh, the one who does not leave these things behind condemns himself as a fool. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). Those who are "not wise" are fools. Anyone who believes he can safely partake of such obviously hurtful and sinful things without consequence makes himself just that: an unwise fool.

Many more reasons could be given, but these are sufficient to show that all drugs—alcohol, tobacco, and all others—must be left behind by a Christian.

FORNICATION, ADULTERY, HOMOSEXUALITY, & PORNOGRAPHY

Sins of a sexual nature are an inescapable part of our modern society. But the one who seeks to please God must leave these behind as well.

There is nothing inherently sinful about sex. God created it when he created "male and female" and said, "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Genesis 1:27-28). In fact, "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled..." (Hebrews 13:4a). Inside the bounds of marriage as established by God, sex is pure and undefiled. Removed from that setting it is immoral: "...but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4b).

FORNICATION (Greek: *porneia*) is defined by Thayer as "illicit sexual intercourse" and refers to harlotry or sex outside of marriage. The modern world revels in all its debased forms, but the Bible condemns it. It is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19). Those who engage in it "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9) and "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8). Thus Christians must "flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

ADULTERY carries all the condemnation of fornication with the added stain of betrayal. It occurs when a married individual engages in sexual relations with someone who is not his or her spouse. Many of the passages that condemn fornication condemn adultery as well (1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:19-21; Hebrews 13:4).

A Christian must have no part in this ungodly action.

HOMOSEXUALITY is increasingly seen by society and government as completely acceptable, but the Bible still condemns it. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for "going after strange flesh" (Jude 1:7). Romans 1:26-27 includes it in the "vile affections" of the Gentile world: "women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And...men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another." 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 clearly states "abusers of themselves with mankind" (the Greek term for homosexuals) "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

PORNOGRAPHY is one of the most widely accepted sexual sins. Many who would never engage in fornication or adultery see nothing wrong with sexually explicit images. But in Matthew 5:28 Jesus said "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Thus pornography in any form must be rejected, whether in magazines, on TV, in movies, on the Internet, or out on the street. Job 31:1 sets the pattern all should follow: "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"

Sexual sins are more popular and accepted today than ever before in our nation's history. Yet that which is right with God never changes: *sexual sins must be left behind.*

The Bible Quiz

1. Who carved the golden calf?
2. Who was the first man?
3. What could Israel not do with fat?
4. How were Esther and Mordecai related?
5. What was Amos' profession?
6. What foreign king decreed that the temple be rebuilt?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Nineveh (Jonah 1:2)
2. "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16)
3. As a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2)
4. Amram and Jochebed (Exodus 6:20)
5. The first day of the week (Acts 20:7)
6. 8 (Genesis 7:13; 1 Peter 3:20)

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UNSCRIPTURAL DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE

Of all the sinful practices that have become common place in our society, few inflict as much spiritual and emotional damage as unscriptural divorce and remarriage. As the number of divorces and remarriages have skyrocketed in recent years, God's laws concerning this practice have been rejected and ignored. But those who desire to be faithful to God must learn his will and conform themselves to it.

Marriage was created by God in the beginning. When God made Eve and brought her to Adam, the result was the first marriage: "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:23-24). Thus marriage is right in God's sight, for he created it. But as with all of God's great blessings, it must be partaken of in the way *he* demands.

The marriage bond is severed in one of two ways: death or divorce. In the case of death, the surviving partner is allowed by God to remarry. In Romans 7:3, the Bible states that if a woman is married to another man "while her husband liveth... 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." The death of one partner severs the bond of marriage and frees the surviving partner to remarry righteously.

Divorce, or "putting away" as it is often called in Scripture, is the dissolution of the marriage bond while both partners are still alive. Modern man allows divorce and remarriage for every reason imaginable. God on the other hand allows only one. In Matthew 19:9: "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." Jesus' teaching is unmistakable: the marriage bond is so important to God that the only justifiable reason for divorce and remarriage is when one's spouse has been sexually unfaithful. When a divorce takes place for any reason other than fornication and then either party remarries, Jesus says those in the new marriage are committing adultery. Thus all those involved in unscriptural divorce and remarriage stand condemned by God as adulterers.

How then can such a situation be remedied? As with regular adultery, it *must* be stopped—one *cannot* continue in sin and still be right with God (Hebrews 10:26). When one steps into Christ, he or she must step out of an unrighteous marriage. This will never be easy, but it will always be right. Those who desire to be right with God must leave *all* sin behind, including unscriptural divorce and remarriage.

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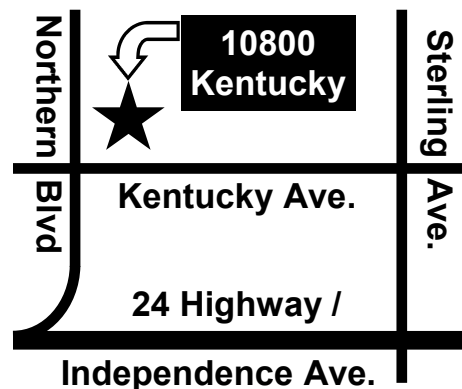
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
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*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
12

DISHONESTY, GOSSIP, & UNGODLY SPEECH

Our modern world is not careful about what it says. It increasingly sees lying, gossip, vulgarity, and all manner of impure speech as perfectly acceptable. In contrast, Christians live by a very different standard—they must learn to control their tongues. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

One vitally important part of godly speech involves **DISHONESTY**. For many today, dishonesty has become the default setting, but Christians understand that honesty is not simply a *good* policy, it is the *only* policy God accepts. Of the seven things God calls "an abomination" in Proverbs 6:16-19, two deal with dishonesty: "a lying tongue" and "a false witness that speaketh lies." Revelation 21:8 states that "all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Thus, Christians realize they must follow Ephesians 4:25: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." No matter the cost, Christians must "buy the truth and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23).

Like lying, many today view **GOSSIP** as "no big deal." However, the Bible says it is a *very* big "deal" indeed. Gossip can injure people deeply: "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Proverbs 18:8). Gossip condemns both those speaking it *and* those listening to it. "A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue" (Proverbs 17:4). In Romans 1:28-32, the Bible includes "whisperers" and "backbiters" along with "haters of God" as those who have "a reprobate mind" and are "worthy of death." Therefore, Christians *must* leave gossip behind.

Christians must leave behind **VULGAR** or **ABUSIVE SPEECH** as well. James 3:9-10 states that it is very easy as human beings to misuse the tongue: "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Rather than such misuse, Christians must follow the instructions found in Ephesians

4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

Regardless of the form it takes and regardless of how much it has been their habit formerly, Christians must leave ungodly speech far behind. Only then can they fulfill the great prayer of Psalms 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

Did You Know?

The word "lips" occurs 119 times in the King James Version! While lips can often get us into trouble with hypocrisy (Matthew 15:8), lying (Psalm 31:18), sexual evils (Proverbs 5:3), and other sins, they can also be used for great things like praising God (Hebrews 13:15) or offering wisdom (Proverbs 10:13). And lips *can* be controlled, even in the most difficult times (Job 2:10), which is a very wise thing indeed (Proverbs 10:19)!

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Tongue"

In James 3:6, the Bible says the tongue can set on fire the entire course of nature. In 3:5, it is compared to the damage a forest fire can cause. Proverbs 18:21 simply says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

The Bible clearly admonishes men to guard the tongue. This is especially true in Proverbs, where the subject often returns to control of some type.

Proverbs 4:24 says "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee." One who seeks to please God must guard what he says.

Proverbs 13:3 states "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction." Thus, if we keep our tongues in subjection, we will retain our lives. Otherwise, destruction follows. Proverbs 12:13 states "The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips" and Proverbs 17:27-28 reveals that "He that hath knowledge spareth his words."

This all informs Proverbs 10:19: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." With this attitude in every heart, gossip, complaining, murmuring, bad feelings, stirred hatreds, and filthy communication would soon cease. More of our communication would be devoted to building one another up, speaking kindly, and trying to help others get to heaven. Let us strive to control our tongues and use them to the glory of God.

LOVE OF MONEY & MATERIALISM

The modern world often seems caught up in an endless pursuit of stuff. Christians understand that such a lifestyle is empty and *must* be left behind.

The Bible never teaches wealth is *inherently* evil. Abraham was "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (Genesis 13:2) and yet was "faithful" (Galatians 3:9). Job was "the greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3), and yet God called him "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8).

The real problem is found in 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." It is the *love* of material things that leads a man to ignore the sorrows of a Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), that causes a man to forget to "take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15), that lulls a fool into a false sense of security (Luke 12:19), and that leads to the condemnation, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20-21). It is a *love* of possessions that can cause a man that Jesus "loved" to go away "grieved" when Jesus told him, "sell what-

soever thou hast, and give to the poor" even though he would "have treasure in heaven" (Mark 10:21-22). It is a blinding desire for wealth that leads to the condemnation, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25).

Love of money is a hunger that can *never* be filled. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Riches can never provide what they promise. They cannot "redeem" a brother from death (Psalm 49:6-9). They are valueless when compared to the soul, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Yet how many sell their only *eternal* possession for that which can never endure?

In contrast, Christians focus on what *will* endure. They lay up "treasures in heaven" that cannot be destroyed (Matthew 6:19-21). They develop the great blessing of contentment, knowing God has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). And they enjoy the great blessing of a life thus lived. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

MURDER, ABORTION, SUICIDE, & EUTHANASIA

Among the many things being lost in our modern society, few are as far reaching as the loss of the respect for life. While most people condemn murder, many also view abortion and euthanasia as a "right." The Christian understands that such thinking must be left far behind.

MURDER began all the way back in Genesis 4:8 when Cain slew Abel. He tried to hide behind the infamous line, "Am I my brother's keeper?," but God replied, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" and he cursed Cain for it (Genesis 4:9-11). Thus, God showed that murder *must* be punished and *cannot* be hidden from him. In the law of Moses, one of the ten commandments was the simple yet clear, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). The punishment was also clear: "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 24:17). The law of Christ retains and strengthens this prohibition: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and **murderers**, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, **shall have their part** in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). Murder, the willful destruction of human life, is clearly wrong.

ABORTION is often championed as a great right in our modern world. But the reality of abortion is inescapable: *it is the killing of an unborn child*. Jeremiah was recognized as *Jeremiah* by God even before his birth (Jeremiah

1:5). John the Baptist was a "babe" while in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41)—just as much as Jesus was a "babe" while "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). So much does God cherish the unborn that in Exodus 21:22-25 those who hurt a child in the womb were to be punished in equal measure, including giving "life for life" if necessary. Thus God's view is clear: Abortion is not just a "choice"—*it is murder!*

Some believe **SUICIDE** is acceptable because it is the decision of the individual. It has become especially popular in connection with **EUTHANASIA** as an acceptable way to deal with terminal illness. While such illness is not to be made light of and the truth that man's life will come to an end cannot be denied (James 4:14), *nothing* in scripture gives man the right to end his own life. Suicide can never escape the fact that it is simply self-inflicted murder. To partake of it is to place one's self in the camp of Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:5).

Life is *sacred!* This sacredness derives from the fact that men are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6)—that he has given to each a spirit which he alone will reclaim one day. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Man has no right to take that which is ultimately God's. He who dares to do so not only forfeits his own life but also will stand condemned in judgment before the very God he has usurped.

The Bible Quiz

1. What was the name of Solomon's mother?
2. When did God first know Jeremiah?
3. Why must we be holy?
4. What was Zacchaeus' profession?
5. Is Israel, what was the penalty for causing the death of an unborn child?
6. What do knowledge and wisdom begin with?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Aaron (Exodus 32:3-4)
2. Adam (Genesis 2:7, 19)
3. Eat it (Leviticus 7:23-24)
4. They were first cousins (Esther 2:7)
5. Herdsman (Amos 1:1)
6. Cyrus (Ezra 1:2)

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OTHER WORKS OF THE FLESH

Though a few of the more difficult changes facing a new Christian have been discussed in detail, these are by no means the only ones—all “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19) must be left behind. And while no passage in Scripture provides a single, exhaustive list, four in particular provide a good overview of what God wants removed: Romans 1:28-32, Colossians 3:5-9, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and Galatians 5:19-21.

Numerous terms in these passages refer to **EVIL in general**. “Unrighteousness,” “wickedness,” “maliciousness” (badness), “malignity” (bad character), “uncleanness” (impurity), and “inventors of evil things” are all things a Christian must leave far behind.

Several terms address the **ANGER** a Christians must let go of: “debate” (quarrelling), being “implacable” (unyieldingly angry), “hatred,” “variance” (quarrelling), “wrath,” “strife,” “seditions” (divisions), “heresies” (sects), and “anger.” Also

included is one of the greatest expressions of anger: “murder.”

Several words deal with **UN-RIGHTEOUS FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES**. This can include things that stir up anger, such as being “despiteful” (an insulter), “proud,” “boasters,” “revilers” (abusive). It can include feelings that show we are not content, such as “envy” and “emulations” (jealousies). This can include not controlling *desires* that are wrong, such as “lasciviousness” (uncontrolled lust), “inordinate affection” (evil passion), or “evil concupiscence” (evil desire). It can even include things that are *lacking* but that *should* be present, such as being “without natural affection” (unloving toward family), “unmerciful,” or “without understanding.” At its worst, it involves being “haters of God” and being involved in “blasphemy.” All such ungodly emotions must be put out of the life of a Christian.

Several terms describe **SPECIFIC ACTIONS to remove**.

Christians cannot be “thieves,” “extortioners” (stealing by coercion), “disobedient to parents,” and “idolators,” or be involved in “witchcraft,” “reveling” (wild partying), or any “such like” (Galatians 5:21).

In short, Christians must stop anything that does not fit with being a Christian. The reasons for this are simple. First, Galatians 5:21 states that “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” If we want to go to heaven, we must let these things go. But perhaps an even stronger reason is found Colossians 3:9: “ye have put off the old man with his deeds.” All of these things are part of what a Christian *once* was but *is no more*. It is part of a life *left behind*—an old way of living that was corrupt and sinful but has now been exchanged for something new and clean and right. That is why a Christian willingly chooses to leave such things behind—to *be something better!*

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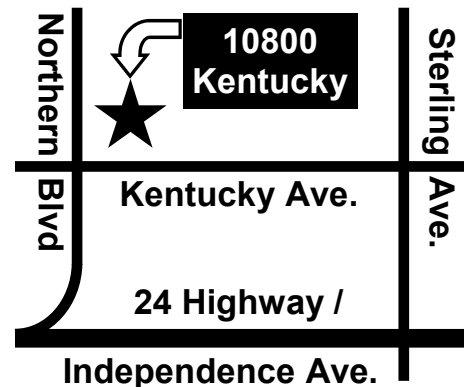
— Services & Times —

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Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
I

*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
13

WHAT A CHRISTIAN MUST ADD: OBEDIENCE & THE MIND OF CHRIST

Christianity requires change, but it is not simply about subtraction. Yes, it means putting off the worldly ways and sinful traits of the past. But it also means adding all the godly actions and spiritual traits that God demands.

The primary reason for removing sinful traits and adding godly ones is exactly the same: *obedience*. Recognizing Jesus as Lord is not enough by itself—one must *obey* him as well. "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). Obedience proves an individual truly knows God: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4). Obedience shows that an individual loves his fellow Christians: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments" (1 John 5:2). And it is obedience that proves one's love for *God*, as Jesus himself said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). That is why our very sal-

vation is dependant on it: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey him**" (Hebrews 5:8-9).

But adding the characteristics God requires is also about much more. At its heart it is about taking on the very mind of Jesus Christ. After all, isn't that why Christians are called Christians—because they follow and emulate *him*? Jesus was obedient in *all* things, even to the point of his own death. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). It was that mindset that allowed Jesus, at the most difficult point in his life, to fervently pray, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

It is this emulation, this capturing of the mind of Christ, that leads to the greatest change individuals will ever experience. This is what leads the abuser to become gentle, the drunkard to become sober, the selfish to think of others, the sinner to live as a saint. A change can never happen independently of Jesus—without his great sacrifice no man could ever stand right before God. But for such a change to become reality, Christians must obediently add all the great characteristics required by Almighty God.

Did You Know?

*There are two different New Testament words for "love"! The first, *phileo*, means to be fond of, such as brethren (*philadelphia*—Hebrews 13:1), strangers (KJV: "hospitality"; *philoxenos*—Romans 12:13), or money (*philarguria*—1 Timothy 6:10), etc. The second, *agape*, is often called the highest form of love. This is the love God had for the world (John 3:16) and that Christians have for one another (John 13:35) and even for their enemies (Matthew 5:44).*

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Words Of The Week: "Put On"

In Romans 13:12 we find another important phrase: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us **put on** the armour of light." "**Put on**" comes from the Greek word *enduo*, which literally means "to sink into" something. Its use in Scripture shows clearly there are things Christians must "put on" in order to please God.

The term itself usually referred to putting on clothing. Thus John was "**clothed with** camel's hair" (Mark 1:6), Jesus says not to worry about "what **ye shall put on**" (Matthew 6:25), and the prodigal son's father told his servant to bring a robe and "**put it on him**" (Luke 15:22).

In this same way, Christians must "put on" righteousness. Christians are *generically* told to "**put ye on...the Lord Jesus Christ**" (Romans 13:14) and "**put on** the new man"—the new, righteous way of living—(Ephesians 4:24). They "**have put on Christ**" in baptism (Galatians 3:27) and thus must live as he lived. Christians are also told to put on *specific* actions. They must "**put on** the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11-18) and "**put on**" the characteristics of mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, love, etc (Colossians 3:12-14).

In short, though the world may teach that Christians do not really need to do anything, the use of *enduo* says the exact opposite. Christians must "put on" those things God says are right in order to be pleasing to him!

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT & THE ARMOR OF GOD

Two well-known passages that show what Christians must add to their lives are Galatians 5:22-23 and Ephesians 6:10-18.

Galatians 5:22-23 describes the "fruit of the spirit." **LOVE, agape**, is the great sacrificial attribute that all Christians must possess. We will examine *agape* in more detail later. **JOY** refers to the calm delight one can have, even in difficulties, because of God's great promises (1 Peter 1:3-9). **PEACE** is the tranquility that is possible internally because of obedience to God (Romans 2:9-10). **LONGSUFFERING** is the patience that, though challenging at times, Christian must show toward everyone (1 Thessalonians 5:14). **GENTLENESS** is the moral excellence that motivates one to help others just as Christ did (Matthew 14:14; 1 John 3:16-18). **GOODNESS** is the moral purity Christians develop as they "abhor that which is evil" and "cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9). **FAITH** is the belief in God and his Son that must be maintained throughout life (Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16). **MEEKNESS** may be best described as the "harnessed strength" of one who humbles himself to God rather than going his own way (1 Peter 5:5-6). **TEMPERANCE** is the self-control that allows one to do all that God requires (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Ephesians 6:10-18 describes the characteristics to add as parts of "the armor of God." **Girt About With TRUTH:** As a belt helped tie the soldier's ar-

mor together, the truth of God's Word ties the Christian characteristics together (John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). **The Breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS:** As the breastplate protected a soldier's vital organs from injury, righteousness guards the soul and makes it acceptable to God (Acts 10:34-35). **Feet Shod With The Preparation Of The GOSPEL OF PEACE:** As sandals provided an essential foundation for standing and fighting, being prepared in the gospel allows the Christian to always "give an answer" for his belief (1 Peter 3:15). **The Shield Of FAITH:** As the shield protected a soldier from attack, belief in God and Jesus allows the Christian to withstand the attacks of Satan himself (1 Peter 8-9). **The Helmet Of SALVATION:** As the helmet protected the head in fierce battles, the knowledge of salvation helps protect a Christian's mind (Romans 8:35-39). **The SWORD OF THE SPIRIT:** As the sword was the primary offensive weapon used to defeat the enemy, the Word of God is the "weapon" used to defeat Satan (Matthew 4:4,7,10) and bring self and others to Christ (Romans 1:16). **PRAYING Always:** As constant communication was crucial in battle, the Christian must "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) to be victorious.

Though there is more to do, those who add "the fruit of the Spirit" and put on "the armor of God" are well on their way to being what God desires.

MORE RIGHTEOUS CHARACTERISTICS

The Bible contains other excellent characteristics for Christians to add as well.

2 Peter 1:5-10 calls for adding eight traits with "all diligence." **DILIGENCE** means "speed" in Greek and shows how seriously a Christian should take this task. **FAITH** (discussed on page 2) is listed first, then **VIRTUE**, that moral excellence and purity that must mark a Christian's thoughts and actions (Philippians 4:8; 2 Peter 1:3). Next is **KNOWLEDGE**—the knowledge of God's word that lets one "rightly divide" it (2 Timothy 2:15) and know "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). **TEMPERANCE** (discussed on page 2) follows, then **PATIENCE**, the endurance of difficulty that allows us to run "the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1) and thereby "receive the promise" of God (Hebrews 10:36). To this is added **GODLINESS**, the piety that motivates one to live a life that is as holy and like God as possible (1 Peter 1:15-16). After this is **BROTHERLY KINDNESS**, the warm, familial love that binds all Christian hearts together and allows them to "love as brethren" (1 Peter 3:8). The final trait is **CHARITY**, or *agape* love (discussed on page 4).

Colossians 3:10-17 discusses the characteristics that show a transition from the "old man" to the "new." In baptism, the "old man" is put to death and the "new man" arises, clean and free from sin (Romans 6:4-7). What should this "new" life be like? It begins by being "renewed in

knowledge"—learning God's will so that the "new man" can take on "the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:10). This new man has **BOWELS OF MERCIES**, an odd sounding phrase to modern ears but that to Greek speakers simply meant the tenderness and kindness Christians strive to show to other Christians (1 John 3:17) and all mankind (Galatians 6:10). **HUMBLENESS OF MIND**, is the attitude of humility every Christian has before God (Matthew 5:3) and man (1 Peter 5:5-6). **FORBEARING** (putting up with) and **FORGIVING** both refer to the attitude Christians must maintain toward each other. Though sin can never be ignored (Jude 1:22-23), the Christian must be willing to forgive and let go rather than hold on to grudges (Luke 17:3-4). Christians must **BE THANKFUL**—recognizing that all spiritual and physical blessings ultimately come from God and expressing gratitude for them (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Finally, Christians will follow the directive of Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all **in the name of the Lord Jesus.**" This simply means that in every aspect of life, the Christian will seek to do all things by *Jesus'* authority. Everything that he has not authorized in Scripture will be rejected and only those things that he has given approval for will be embraced. In this way the Christian will slowly but surely remove all sinful and worldly things and replace them with the wonderful character of a new life in Christ.

The Bible Quiz

1. Who housed the two spies in Jericho?
2. How were Mary and Elizabeth related?
3. How many times did Naaman wash in Jordan?
4. What did God use to make Eve?
5. What is sin?
6. Who led Israel out of Egypt?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:24)
2. Before he was formed in the womb (Jeremiah 1:5)
3. Because God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16)
4. Publican (tax-collector—Luke 19:2)
5. Death (Exodus 21:23)
6. The fear of the LORD (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10)

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THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Many great characteristics can be found in scripture. Ephesians 4:25-32 teaches one must only use wholesome language and be honest, hardworking, and willing to give. Matthew 28:19-20 shows one must teach others about Jesus. Hebrews 10:24-25 states Christians must gather together to encourage one another. Many others could be discussed as well. But of all the characteristics that could be examined, the Bible returns to one over and over and over again: Love.

The Greek language has many words for love, but it is *agape* (often translated "charity" in the King James Version) that emphasizes doing the best for others regardless of the consequence to self. This is the love God had for the world when he gave his Son (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). This is the love Jesus had when he gave himself (Ephesians 5:25). And this is the love that must permeate every part of a Christian's life.

In Matthew 22:36-40, when asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In Matthew 5:44, he said to love even our *enemies*—just as God loved us "when we were enemies" with him (Romans 5:10). Thus Jesus taught that love must undergird every action in our lives, whether directed toward God or men. We show our love for God when we keep his commandments (John 14:15). And we show our love for men when we help them overcome physical and spiritual troubles (Luke 10:25-37; Romans 1:14-17).

Love is inseparable from Christianity. It is part of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22), what one is "rooted and grounded" in (Ephesians 3:17), how hearts are "knit together" (Colossians 2:2),

part of the example one must set in youth (1 Timothy 4:12) and old age (Titus 2:2), what one must "walk in" (Ephesians 5:2), the capstone of characteristics to add (2 Peter 1:7), "the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14), and much more. In fact, love is so important that 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says that all abilities, gifts, faith, and sacrifices are meaningless without it. No wonder then that of all possible characteristics, Jesus stated it is *love* that shows his true followers to the world: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

There are many great characteristics that a Christian must add to his or her life. Each of them is important and essential. But love surpasses them all, for it is love that binds all the others together. Indeed, "the greatest of these **is charity**" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

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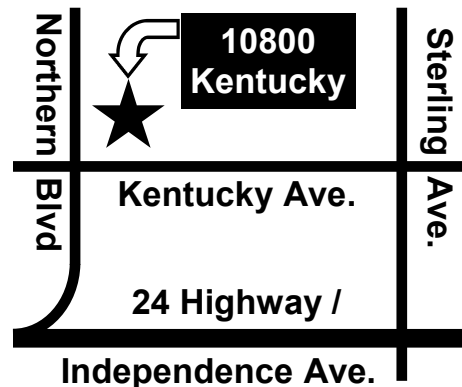
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

VOL
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*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

NO
14

THE SECOND COMING & JUDGMENT

There is a great day coming. It is not a birthday or an anniversary. It is not a meeting with any school or business associate. It is not an election or political revolution. Yet it is a day that will have a profound effect on the world, its current inhabitants, and all who have ever lived. It is the day of judgment.

Is it real? If one looks into scripture, there can be no doubt that day *is* coming. Jesus refers to the "the day of judgment" many times (Matthew 10:15; 11:22,24; etc). He illustrates it in numerous parables, describing the judgment "at the end of the world" in the tares and the net (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50) and describing the need to be ready for his return in the ten virgins and the talents (Matthew 25:1-13, 14-30). Many other New Testament writers refer to the day of judgment as well.

What will that day be like? First, it will be unannounced. The Bible says there will be none of the "warning signs" that religious leaders, book sellers, and filmmakers have tried to portray. That day will come "as a thief in the

night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Jesus said "the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40). Second, Jesus will visibly return. That day will not be a secret—it will be seen and known by all. In Acts 1:11, Jesus' disciples were told he would "come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Revelation 1:7 states "every eye shall see him." Third, it will involve the resurrection and change of all men. Everyone "in the graves," whether good *or* bad, "shall hear his voice, and...come forth" (John 5:28-29). Everyone, good *or* bad, will be given a body to last for eternity (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Matthew 25:41). Fourth, it will involve the destruction of the world. No one will be "left behind" on earth. The faithful will go to "be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and the unfaithful will go to the place "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). The earth itself will be destroyed. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall

melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). Fifth, It will involve the judgment of all men. On that great, final day, the righteous will be separated from the unrighteous "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32). That fact leads to another question.

How will men be judged? First, the standard of judgment will be the Bible. Jesus said: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the — SEE page 2

Did You Know?

Jesus did not go to Hell! Though many have assumed this over the years, a closer look at the Greek shows this is not the case. When Acts 2:27 and 31 state Jesus' soul was not left in "hell," the Greek term used is *Hades*, a word that simply refers to the place of the dead, rather than *Ge-henna*, which is the word that refers to the place of eternal punishment. Thus a deeper look at the Greek helps correct a common misconception.

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: "Hell"

In the Bible, three words are frequently translated "hell." Each of these has a different and important meaning. Understanding these words and their usage helps one properly understand the Bible's view of hell.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *Sheol* refers to the place of the dead. At times it refers to where the dead are buried and is thus translated "grave" (Genesis 37:35; Job 7:9). At others, it refers to the final dwelling place of all mankind (Psalm 89:48; Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The New Testament commonly uses two Greek words. The first is *Hades*. Like *Sheol*, *Hades* is a generic term for the place of the dead. Thus "the gates of hell [*Hades* or death]" would not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18) and Jesus' soul would not be left in "hell [*Hades—death*]" (Acts 2:27, 31).

The final Greek term, *Gehenna*, is the term that usually connected to eternal punishment. It derives from the Hebrew words for "valley of Hinnom," a valley located to the Southwest of Jerusalem. In that awful place, children were burned to the god Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6) and it eventually became synonymous with depravity, destruction, and slaughter (Jeremiah 19:6). By the time of the New Testament, it had become a trash and refuse dump that was continually burning. Thus it served as a perfect description of the place of eternal corruption and torment; a place "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:47-48).

FROM page 1 — word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Second, men will be judged by what they do in life.

God set the standard and expects all men to obey it. Everything we have done will be revealed, "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Thus, what we do in life will determine our eternal destiny: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to

that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Third, each one will be given an eternal home in heaven or in hell. Discussing the final resurrection, Jesus said all men "shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). In Matthew 25:46, he makes it clear how that great day will end: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Thus it is clear that there is a great day coming. Are you ready?

HELL

The Bible contains only two options when it comes to man's eternal destiny. There is only a "narrow" way "which leadeth unto life" or a "broad" way "that leadeth to destruction" (Matthew 7:13-14). There is only a "resurrection of life" or a "resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). There is only eternity in the "Father's house" (John 14:1-3) or eternity in the place "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:46). In short, there is only heaven or hell.

Most human beings only want to talk or think about heaven. But the reality of hell cannot be denied. Jesus himself said all but a "few" would end up there (Matthew 7:13-14). Therefore, it would be wise to consider what hell is like so that we can decide if we want to spend eternity there or if we want to do what God says to avoid it.

Many wonder why hell even exists. It is true that God is a God of love who made a way for men to be saved through the great gift of his Son (Romans 5:6-10). But scripture also teaches that God is a God of holiness which he expects all men to imitate (1 Peter 1:15-16). Since "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," he cannot have fellowship those that "walk in darkness" (1 John 1:5-6). Thus, when men engage in sin, they earn death (Romans 6:23)—eternal separation from that Holy God in a place called hell.

Hell is a place beyond human description. This is why some descriptions seem difficult to reconcile—they do not describe physical things, but rather the horrific nature of that place. Hell is a place of "everlasting" and "unquenchable" fire (Matthew 25:41; 3:12)—a picture of its unending destruction and pain. But it is also a place of "outer darkness" (Matthew 25:30)—a de-

scription of the fear and isolation it contains. It is a place where "their worm dieth not" (Mark 9:48)—a graphic image of the defilement, rottenness, and decay that fills it. It is a place of "wailing and gnashing of teeth" because of the torment it holds (Matthew 13:42, 50). It is a place whose inhabitants "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone," where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Revelation 14:10-11). It is a place of the never-ending torment of "everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46) and "everlasting destruction" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is a place of separation from all that is right and good, "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is a place where man will experience the fulfillment of "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Hebrews 10:30). It is a place that fulfills all the terror of "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews

10:31) Thus, hell is a place to be avoided at all costs. In Luke 12:4-5, speaking of the fearful power of God, Jesus said, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

As much as men desire not to think of that place, hell still exists. It will be the eternal abode of Satan and his angels (Matthew 25:41), all the defiled of all the ages (Romans 2:5-11; Revelation 21:8), and all those who "know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Thus, anyone who is not an obedient member of *his* body (Ephesians 5:23)—anyone who is not part of *Jesus'* church rather than a "church" created by man—will be cut off in that day and cast out into the fire and pain and torment of eternal punishment.

Are you ready for that day?

HEAVEN

Just as there is a place called hell, so too there *is* a place called heaven. Heaven is the place all the faithful throughout time have looked toward, seeing it "afar off," being "persuaded" by its reality, confessing they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and desiring a "better," "heavenly" country—"a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10-16). It was

that reality to which Jesus pointed his disciples on the night of his betrayal with the simple statement: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14:1-2). And to all those who have looked to him and his Word in all the years since that time there is no doubt: heaven is real.

— SEE page 4

The Bible Quiz

1. How many wisemen visited Jesus?
2. What are the two greatest commandments?
3. What were the Babylonian names of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah?
4. How many wives and concubines did Solomon have?
5. What city was Jesus born in?
6. What is God's power unto salvation?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. Rahab (Joshua 2:1)
2. They were cousins (Luke 1:34-36)
3. 7 (2 Kings 5:10, 14)
4. Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21-22)
5. Transgression of the law (1 John 3:4)
6. Moses (Exodus 3:10-11)

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FROM page 3 — Heaven is a place that defies understanding. It is a place of eternity, where the faithful shall “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), experience “everlasting life” (John 3:16), and have bodies changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52) to be “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). Heaven is a place “wherein dwelleth righteousness” and thus sin *cannot* exist (2 Peter 3:13), where “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54), and whose inhabitants wear the victory “crown” (2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10). It is a place that is “far better” (Philippians 1:23), a place all Christians can look to as they face the storms of life, confident in the knowledge that they have waiting for them “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1). It is a place where all the faithful will “eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the

paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7) and where those that “die in the Lord” are “blessed” as they “rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13). Heaven is a place described with gates of “pearls” and streets of “pure gold, as it were transparent glass,” a place that has “no need of the sun, neither of the moon” yet has no night because “the glory of God...and the Lamb is the light thereof,” and a place that never will contain “any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:21-27). It is a place where the faithful of all the ages will be with God “and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4).

Sadly, as wonderful as heaven is, only “few” will be there in the end (Matthew 7:14). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, but many live as if heaven will just happen without any effort on their part, as if the desires of self or the commands of man-made religion can save them in the end. Such will never be the case—heaven is not an accident. We *choose* it by our *obedience*. “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). Jesus “became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey** him” (Hebrews 5:9). Thus, if you and I want that great home, we must conform ourselves to *his* will, not our own. And if we *do*, heaven *will* be ours. “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).

Are you ready for that day?

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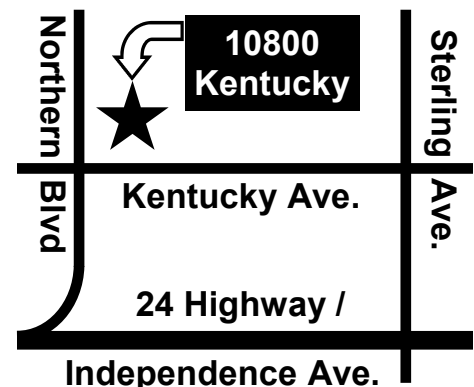
— Services & Times —

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 AM
Worship 9:50 AM
Bible Study 11:00 AM

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM



KNOW THE TRUTH

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*"And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:32*

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THE CHOICE: LIFE WITH OR WITHOUT GOD

Over the past fourteen weeks, we have covered an amazing array of Biblical topics together. We have considered proofs for the existence of God and the Bible's inspiration, introduced the Old and New Testaments and the theme of the Bible, analyzed the nature and characteristics of God, studied in depth about salvation including why it is necessary, seen what God has done for us and what he expects *us* to do in response, investigated the distinctive nature of Jesus' church, including its organization, worship, and works, looked at important things that Christians must leave behind and important things that Christians must add, and examined the coming judgment and the two possible eternal destinations that await all mankind. Much more could be explored, for the Bible is an amazing wealth of information. However, for the purposes of this series of newsletters, sufficient information has been presented. The time has now come to consider the alternatives...*and choose!*

In reality, there are only two options before all mankind: life

with God and life *without* him. It is not the purpose of, nor is it within the power of this series of letters to force you to decide which one you will choose. But it *has* been the purpose of this series to bring into focus the realities of each option so that you can *choose*, with wisdom and foresight, which path *you* will take.

In the simplest sense, the choice is between "destruction" at the end of the "broad way" or "life" at the end of the "narrow" one (Matthew 7:13-14), between "everlasting fire" or "everlasting life" (Matthew 25:41; John 3:16), between heaven on the one hand and hell on the other. But where you will spend eternity is only one aspect of the choice you face.

Your choice is between a life that is *defiled* and one that is *clean*. When you live like the world, your life is stained with sin. Returning to that life is graphically described in 2 Peter 2:22 as a dog "turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." But when you live as God would have you live, you have the as-

urance of 1 Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified."

Your choice is between a life that is full of *sorrow* and one that is full of *joy and peace*. The wise man Solomon wrote, "the way of transgressors is hard" (Proverbs 13:15), and such is certainly true. From the chains of drugs and alcohol, to the emptiness of worldly sexuality, from the misery of lies and deceit, to all the other ungodly ways men

— SEE page 2

Did You Know?

The choice is yours! The God of the universe has placed the power to choose in the hands of each and every one of us. He wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and calls on "all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30), but he leaves the decision to draw near to him or turn away up to each and every individual (James 4:8; Joshua 24:15; 1 John 1:6-7). No one else can make that decision for you. What will you choose?

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek strives to follow the pattern set forth in the New Testament (Colossians 3:17). You are invited to visit at every opportunity!

Word Of The Week: Choose

A common dictionary definition of "choose" is "to select freely and after consideration...to make a selection." That is exactly what each of us is called to do in respect to God: study the matter, consider the alternatives, and then choose.

By the end of his life, Joshua recognized he was "going the way of all the earth" (Joshua 23:14). But before his life ended, he gave a final message to his beloved nation. In the heart of that message was the charge to choose. "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

That same charge rings true today. You and I and every human being must choose between the "gods" of this world and the One True God. We must choose between God and "mammon" (worldly goods—Matthew 6:24). We must choose between the "broad" way "that leadeth to destruction" and the "narrow" way that "leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:13-14). We must choose between God and our family (Matthew 10:34-37). We must choose between God and our own lives (Matthew 10:38-39).

Those choices will not always be easy. But if we choose wisely, if we choose what is right, the result will be more than worth it.

Friend, choose wisely. Choose rightly. Choose God.

FROM page 1 — destroy themselves, a life of sin is a life filled with sorrow. But when you live a *godly* life, though storms will still appear at times, you will always have a sense of joy and peace that comes from a relationship with God. "Be careful 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" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Ultimately, the choice you make is between a life that is

rejected by the Almighty God or one that is accepted by him. It is a choice between hearing "Depart from me, ye cursed" or "Come, ye blessed of my Father" (Matthew 25:41, 34). It is a choice between being banished "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" or fulfilling both now and forever the great and precious promise, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The choice before you is clear and it is possible to make. Think carefully and choose wisely. Choose the life with God.

DO NOT DELAY

Sadly, when faced with a serious decision, the most common choice is to make no choice at all. When dealing with family, friends, work, school, or even God, most people prefer to put the decision off for another day. This is nothing new. In Acts 24:25, Paul was preaching to the Roman governor, "and as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Felix trembled. He understood what Paul was saying, he understood that he was not right with God, and he knew that he would face eternal rejection and punishment because of that. Yet he was unwilling to make the choice. He put it off for a "convenient season." But the problem with procrastination is that no matter what form it takes, it *never* solves the problem.

Many believe they can escape the problem by not taking sides. They think that by *not* making a choice they have not yet *committed* to one. But in fact, that is not true. In the eyes of God, *not* choosing is a choice as well. In Matthew 12:30, Jesus said, "He that is **not with me is against me**; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." In other words, by not actively choosing to be *on* God's side, we are actually choosing to be *against* him.

Some take a different approach—they know what they *should* do and *intend* to do it, but believe they will have time "later" when that more "convenient season" shows up. The problem with this is that such a season often never appears. Life is uncertain. We can make plans, but life has a way of changing them for us. "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go

into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:13-14). We may be like the rich man in Luke 12:19-20, who said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee..." We may think we have plenty of time to choose "tomorrow," but "tomorrow" may never come.

The reality is that the day is coming in which we will no longer be able to make that choice—it will be too late, the door of opportunity will be forever shut, and we will be left like the five foolish and unprepared virgins in Matthew 25:11-13, desperately crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man

cometh." Luke 13:24-25 paints the same dismal picture in different words: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."

The reality is that we need to make the decision to serve God right now because right now is all that we have. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Do not wait. Do not delay. You have no time but this present moment. Choose hope. Choose blessing. Choose right. Choose God and a home in heaven. Make that choice today.

THE CLOSING EXHORTATION

O *bey God!* Nothing in this world matters compared to that simple yet forceful statement. In your heart of hearts, as difficult as it may be, you know that that obedience is what you want.

Obey God!

You know you want to be right—right with the reality of

truth (John 17:17), right with your fellow man (1 John 1:7), right with the God of all creation (John 14:15). And you know there is only one way to be right—

Obey God!

You know you want to be clean—washed free of the stain of sin. Only God makes that possible. He has the

— SEE page 4

The Bible Quiz

1. Do you know how to find the truth (John 8:31-32)?
2. Have you obeyed God as you should (Matthew 7:21-23)?
3. Are you ready to be judged by him (2 Corinthians 5:10)?
4. Do you know you *can* be ready, *if* you obey him (1 John 4:17; 2:28; Hebrews 5:8-9)?

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS:

1. The Bible never says (Cf. Matthew 2:1ff) **2.** #1 Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, #2 Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40) **3.** Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (Daniel 1:6-7) **4.** 700 wives, 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3) **5.** Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1) **6.** The gospel (Romans 1:16)

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about any of the material you read in this newsletter, or if you have other questions that you would like to discuss, please contact us and let us know. You can reach us at:

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FROM page 3 — power to make the scarlet sins white as snow, to turn the crimson into wool (Isaiah 1:18). He gives you the opportunity to be washed, sanctified, justified, redeemed—all by the precious blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:18-19). And you know there is only one way to be clean—

Obey God!

You know you want peace—the true peace of heart and mind “which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). And you know there is only one way to have that peace—

Obey God!

You know you want the beauties and wonders and joys of heaven. You want to be in that place where every tear and every sorrow are forever wiped away (Revelation 21:1-4). You want to be where you will forever dwell with God (John 14:1-3). And you know there is only one way to get there—

Obey God!

The invitation stands open. As long as your life continues,

that door will always be open. As long as you draw breath, the great call of Jesus the Christ will sound forth to you as it does to all: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). God, the great and loving Father of all mankind, stands waiting: waiting to receive you, waiting to run to you, waiting to embrace you as the father did the prodigal son in Luke 15:20. *He* wants you to come home. *His faithful children* want you to come home. *All his angels* want you to come home (Luke 15:7). And *you* want to *go* home. Do not let that door close! Do not let that opportunity pass!

Obey God!

Commit fully to follow him. Leave behind all the human ideas and man-made religions that he will reject in the end (Matthew 15:9, 13). Become a Christian in the way the Bible teaches—by hearing (Romans 10:17), believing (John 3:16), repenting (Acts 17:30), confessing (Matthew 10:32-33), and being baptized (Acts 22:16).

Become part of *his* church, the church he *will* save (Ephesians 5:23). Live faithfully, growing in his Word (1 Peter 2:1-2), maturing in your commitment (2 Peter 1:5-10), loving him with everything you are (Matthew 22:37), and holding on to him no matter what (Revelation 2:10). And then, in the end, go home. Go home to the God who loved you enough to send his Son (John 3:16). Go home to the God who longs to say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21, 23).

Obey God!

The church of Christ in Sugar Creek, Missouri is ready to help you in this endeavor. Whether you desire to study more or to become a Christian and fully commit to God, the church is willing to assist you in any way it can.

The door stands open. The call goes out—

Obey God!

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Would you like to study the Bible in the privacy of your own home? Simply write, call, or visit

our website for a FREE Bible correspondence course. All lessons are done online or through the mail and no one will visit you unless you request it!

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

If you would prefer to study the Bible in person, please let us know. We would be happy to study with you any time!

**For more information,
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