

What Does the Bible Say About...



The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Adult Wednesday Night Bible Class Summer Quarter 2022

Table of Contents

What Does the Bible Say About...

Lesson 1:	Using Instrumental Music in Worship	5
	<i>Wednesday, July 6, 2022</i>	
Lesson 2:	Use of Applause in Worship	12
	<i>Wednesday, July 13, 2022</i>	
Lesson 3:	Faithful Attendance	18
	<i>Wednesday, July 20, 2022</i>	
Lesson 4:	Role of Faith & Works in Salvation	24
	<i>Wednesday, July 27, 2022</i>	
Lesson 5:	Mary's Role in the Plan of Salvation	30
	<i>Wednesday, August 3, 2022</i>	
Lesson 6:	Life in Outer Space	38
	<i>Wednesday, August 10, 2022</i>	
Lesson 7:	Divorce for Any Reason	46
	<i>Wednesday, August 17, 2022</i>	
Lesson 8:	Abortion	51
	<i>Wednesday, August 24, 2022</i>	
Lesson 9:	Animal Rights	59
	<i>Wednesday, August 31, 2022</i>	
Lesson 10:	Transgenderism	64
	<i>Wednesday, September 7, 2022</i>	
Lesson 11:	Antichrist	73
	<i>Wednesday, September 14, 2022</i>	
Lesson 12:	Calling Men "Reverend"	79
	<i>Wednesday, September 21, 2022</i>	
Lesson 13:	Apostles Today	84
	<i>Wednesday, September 28, 2022</i>	

What Does the Bible Say About...

Using Instrumental Music in Worship

Any denominational visitor unfamiliar with the worship of the Church of Christ will readily notice something most peculiar about our worship: the lack of instrumental music. This is not a preference for traditional versus contemporary styles of music in worship. It is a matter of choosing Biblical or scriptural music by which to worship God. The motivation is to worship in a way that is pleasing to God.

Today, many mainstream congregations are embroiled in a struggle over styles of worship. Some of these churches have split into two groups. Others simply split up their worshipers into two or three different services: traditional worship which may include a piano or organ with a choir or contemporary worship which may include drums, brass instruments, etc.

A century and a half ago the Christian Church and the Church of Christ divided over the inclusion of instrumental music in worship. Today, many progressive churches are now including instrumental music in their worship or at least adding an additional worship service which uses instrumental music.

As New Testament Christians we seek to worship God in a way that is pleasing to Him. Jesus spoke of God seeking a specific type of worshiper to worship Him. *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23,24). The kind of worshiper God wants is a *"true worshiper."* If there are true

worshipers then there must be false or untrue or erroneous worshipers. In other words there are those who are the right kind of worshipers whom God is looking for and those who are the wrong kind of worshipers.

How does one worship God with the kind of music pleasing to Him? Two passages outline the type of music and the role it plays in their worship to God. *"Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord"* (Eph. 5:19). *"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"* (Col. 3:16,17).

First, Christians are to sing not play. Instrumental music is excluded from worship because God specified that He wants vocal music. The heart is to be the instrument that makes the melody (Eph. 5:19). While singing Christians are praising God and teaching and admonishing fellow-saints when they sing. All singing is to be done in truth and with the understanding of what is being sung (1 Cor. 14:15). The purpose of singing is multifaceted: to praise God (Acts 16:24); teach men (Col. 3:16); and express our emotions (Js. 5:15). Playing an instrument cannot fulfill the commands of God which singing can. A worshiper cannot *"speak"* by playing an instrument (Eph. 5:19). An organ cannot teach Bible truths or admonish another, only singing can do this (Col. 3:16). A worshiper is to sing with the spirit and with understanding, but he cannot play with the spirit and with understanding (1 Cor 14:15). God wants true worshipers to make melody in their heart not on a harp (Eph. 5:19).

Those congregations who remain true to the New Testament pattern for worship do not have to



worry about this renewed conflict over music in worship. God has specified how He wishes to be worshiped. He wants us to sing unto Him and one another (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Those who wish to please God and be the kind of true worshiper He is looking for will place what God likes over their own preferences.

Reasons Why the Church of the New Testament Did Not Use Instrumental Music

There is absolutely no evidence that the early church used any instruments of music in the worship of God. Why is that? It is not because they did not like it or could not afford it or just wanted to be different. Use of instruments in worship was common among the pagan religions. Again the real issue is over the Will of God and authority from His Word for the inclusion of instrumental music. Since God has given no authority for its use, a New Testament church does not utilize it in worship.

The use of Instrumental Music in Worship is Not Pleasing to God, Because...

- **It Is Lawlessness**

In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus condemned those who practice things in religious service to Him which are not part of His law. He said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* Thayer says that "lawlessness" is "the condition of one without law, either because ignorant of it, or because violating it" (Thayer 48). Mechanical music in worship is not found in the law of Christ. Therefore, it is lawlessness. *"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness"* (1 Jn. 3:4).

- **It Violates the Law of Worship**

As stated above worship must be expressed in spirit and truth to be pleasing to God (Jn. 4:23,24). The Word of God is truth (Jn. 17:17). Instrumental music is not included in the Word of truth. Therefore, it is not worshiping in truth.

God has always required obedient worship: Cain and Abel, Gen. 4:2-8); Aaron's Golden Calf (Ex. 32); Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3); King Saul (1 Sam. 15); sin of Jeroboam (1 Kgs. 12:28-32); King Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:4; 16-21); Snake Worship (2 Kgs. 18:4); and the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:20-29).

The use of instrumental music is worship which is not obedient, but vain worship (Matt. 15:1-9) and will worship (Col. 2:23).

- **It Violates the Law of Unity**

The use of instrumental music in worship has caused great religious division for many years. Religious division is condemned (1 Cor. 1:10). Christ's body of believers is not to be divided (1 Cor. 12:28)

Romans 15:5 teaches that the law of unity demands that we be of the same mind: *"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus."* If one practices vocal music and one practices instrumental music, they are not "of the same mind." Vocal is authorized. Instrumental music is not. Therefore, instrumental music causes destruction of the law of unity.

- **It Violates the Law of Faith**

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). We walk by faith, (2 Cor. 5:7). We walk by faith not by opinion. What music do we use in worship? Opinion says instrumental music. Faith says vocal or sing in Eph. 5:19. We must have faith in order to please God, (Heb. 11:6). Furthermore, *"whatsoever is not of faith is sin"* (Rom. 14:23). God's Word does not include instrumental music; therefore it is not of faith or walking by faith or pleasing to God, but sin.

- **It Violates the Law of Exclusion**

Music includes two specific kinds: mechanical and vocal. The Bible does not use the general term "music", but uses "sing." The New Testament scriptures always teach us to sing in worship: Mt. 26:30; Ac. 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Js. 5:13. For example, the elements of the Lord's Supper are specified as fruit of the vine and unleavened bread. The general terms of "food" and

"drink" are never used to identify the elements of the Lord's Supper. If the general command "to make music" had been used then and only then would we be authorized to sing, play, or sing and play. When God specifies the one things he wants He excludes everything else. Again for example when Christ specified He wanted the fruit of the vine to drink and the food unleavened bread to eat at the Lord's Supper He excluded Dr. Pepper and hotdogs or Coffee and donuts.

- **It Is an Addition to God's Word**

The Bible abounds with warnings not to add to the Word of God (Dt. 4:2; etc.). *"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Rev. 22:18,19). Those who use mechanical music in worship have added to God's Word.

- **It Is a Presumptuous Sin**

Those who advocate something god has not commanded are guilty of presumptuous sin, *"But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die"* (Deut. 18:20). David prayed to be kept from presumptuous sin. *"Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression"* (Ps. 19:13). Mechanical music is not commanded by God. Therefore, mechanical music is a presumptuous sin.

- **It Is Not a Part of God's Revelation**

The apostles were guided into all truth. *"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come"* (Jn. 16:13). The Holy Spirit was to bring all things to the apostles remembrance. *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you"* (Jn. 14:26). The apostles declared the whole counsel of God to us (Acts. 20:27). The Holy Spirit did not bring to their remembrance the use of mechanical music or guide them to use it or to declare it as part of the whole counsel of God.

- **It Is Going Beyond God's Word**

Christians are commanded *"not to think beyond what is written"* (1 Cor. 4:6). They are to abide in the doctrine or teachings of Christ. *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son"* (2 Jn. 9). To "abide in" is to remain in, continue in. Mechanical music in worship is not a part of the doctrine of Christ. Therefore to use it is not to abide in the doctrine of Christ but to go beyond what is written.

- **It Violates the Law of Silence**

This is reason number ten why the church of the New Testament of the first century and today do not use instrumental music in worship. This reason will be explored below when dealing with the reasons why some churches or denominations use it.

Arguments Used to Defend the Use of Instrumental Music in Worship

- **Argument from the Silence of the Scriptures**

One of the most popular defenses used for instrumental music in worship is: "God didn't say 'Thou shalt not have instrumental music in worship'" Martin Luther, during the reformation movement contended that "we are at liberty to do anything which is not expressly forbidden by the scriptures."

To say that God permits something by saying nothing about it, would be giving us the right to put words in His mouth. Instead, we are commanded speak only where the Bible speaks and thus be silent where it is silent (1 Peter 4:11; Num. 22:25).

This argument opens the flood gate to every innovation known to man. By the same line of reasoning we would have to accept burning incense, playing checkers, sacrificing animals, hamburgers and Pepsi on the Lord's Table, etc. because they too are not expressly condemned in the scriptures.

As mentioned above God's law of exclusion would be ignored and violated by this argument. When

God specifies one thing, it excludes all other additions. For example, God told Noah to build an ark out of gopher wood. He didn't have to tell Noah not to build a conoe nor to build it out of oak, pine, popular, etc. By specifying exactly what He wanted, God automatically excluded all types of vessels or wood.

The case of the Lord being a Priest the Hebrew writer observed *"for it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood"* (Heb. 7:14). Moses' command was specific, only those of the tribe of Levi were to be of the priesthood after the order of Aaron. Moses was silent about any priest coming from the tribe of Judah, so anyone from Judah was excluded from the priesthood.

The Law doesn't say "Thou shalt not have hamburgers and Coke on the Lord's table or play checkers or streak as a form of worship. Laws authorize only what it authorizes. It is not required to detail everything it doesn't authorize. The law of the State states that the speed limit is now 65 mph. It doesn't have to put signs up which condemn 60,70, 90 mph. etc. for people to know what is authorized and what is not. *"A word authorizes us to do only that which it includes in its meaning (the Bible said sing) in the absence however of the second command (play) the instrument is excluded - not authorized or left out."* (G. C. Brewer, A Medley, pp. 61,62).

In fact, this argument demands the impossible. Can you imagine every time God gave a command for something to be done, then, added the negatives, but don't do this and don't do that..." If we wish to order a meal at a restaurant we simply specify what we want to eat to the waiter. "I would like scrambled eggs, two slices of bacon and three pancakes with blueberry syrup." We do not have to say, "but I do not want a hamburger, french fries, onion rings, spaghetti, etc." Or if we take our car for an oil change and it comes back with a fresh paint job of purple with pink dots we would be upset to hear the response: "well you did not say not to paint our car whatever we wanted to." When the Lord specified the elements to be used on the Lord's Table He did not have to say "Thou shalt not put potatoes, peas, carrots, lettuce, tomatoes, etc. on the Lord's Supper."

The Will of Christ is carried out on the basis of what it says, not what it doesn't say (Heb. 8:16). When God says nothing there is a red light, not a green light.

- **Instrumental Music in the Old Testament Argument**

Christians cannot go to the Old Testament to find authority for mechanical instruments of music in worship. King David certainly worshiped with trumpets and stringed instruments (Ps. 22:1-3; 150:3-5), because God commanded their use (2 Chron. 29:25).

First, David used them by way of God's command and thus divine authority. What must be show is where the church of the New Testament has been commanded to use them in worship. There are some 225 references to musical instruments in the Old Testament and only twenty-one in the New Testament. Most of these usage in the New Testament is not literal instruments but figurative. Not one single reference is used in the New Testament in reference to their use in worship unto God in the church. Furthermore even if God commanded instrumental music on every page of the Old Testament, that would not authorize it for our use in worship today.

There are many things used and accepted in the Old Testament which are not be part of the church or our Christian lives today. separated priesthood, religiously motivated circumcision, animal sacrifice, burning of incense, polygamy, etc. How can one accept the authority of the Old Testament to approve of instrumental music in worship today and yet exclude these?

The Old Testament law has been abolished (Eph. 2:14-15); blotted out and nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14); changed (Heb. 7:12); and taken away (Heb. 10:9). According to Galatians 3:24-25 Christians are not *"under a schoolmaster"* (the law). When the Jews became Christians Paul explained that they became *"dead to the law"* (Rom. 7:4). Paul also warns that to keep part of the Law requires that one keep all of it (Gal. 5:3) and to keep the Law is to fall from grace.

The church is under a new covenant. Christ took away the first to establish the second. *"He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"* (Heb. 10:9-10). It is a better covenant (Heb. 9:5). The blood of animals, the tabernacle, circumcision, the high priesthood of Aaron and instrumental music in worship are not part of the New Covenant (Testament).

- **Instruments in Heaven Argument**

Another popular argument is for the use of harps and other instruments of music in worship to God is its use in Heaven to worship God (Rev. 1:10; 4:1 5:8-9; 8:2; 14:1-4; 15:2, 12). The basic argument is that if God can be worshiped in Heaven with instrumental music, He can be worship in the same way in the church on earth.

This argument is based on a misconception concerning the nature of heaven; the failure to identify symbolic language especially in the book of Revelation and mistakenly parallel the worship of heaven with the worship on earth.

Whatever in is Heaven is to be acceptable on earth? What about there being no marriage in Heaven (Mt. 22:30)? We know marriage is acceptable before God (Heb. 13:4; and I Tim. 4:1-4). Angels are in heaven are they in the church? What about the four living creatures who are in Heaven? Should they be in the church.

In Revelation 14:1-4 the voice was as harpers harping with their harps indicating harmony. Denominations don't even use harps. Furthermore, they weren't playing or singing and playing, but they were simply singing. Those singing were Jewish male virgins. And why the harps in the worship and leave out the "thunder" and the "water"? The plurality of harps shows that each one had one. Yet not everyone plays and instrument in worship today. Do spiritual beings use literal harps? Verse two indicates that the harps may be symbolic.

We must also stand on a *"sea of glass mingled with fire"* when worshiping with harps (Rev. 15:2,3). If the harps are literal, why not the censer, incense, altar, and fire? The sounding of the seven trumpets is symbolic like the opening of the seven seals, pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath, and the sounding of the seven thunders.

God is a spirit (Jn. 4:24). God doesn't dwell in places made with hands (Ac. 17:24,25). Therefore heaven must be a spiritual place.

Even if there will be literal musical instruments in heaven you will never use them in worship to God if you add to God's Word by using than to worship God on earth (Rev. 22:18,19).

- **The Talent Argument**

Finally, there is the argument based upon the musical talent of the worshiper. The basic argument goes like this 1) all God-given talents should be used in worshiping God; 2) some have the God-given talent to play instruments; 3) therefore, some should play instruments in worship.

Man was created with the capacities for offering animal sacrifices, enjoying ice cream, making babies, should these naturally created abilities be used in worship. Washing hands is not morally wrong, but it was wrong to do so as an act of worship (Mk. 7:1-3). Keep in mind something can be morally right to do, but religiously wrong.

David confined the playing to the male Levites. What about all those Israelites and woemn who are talented?

Abel worshiped God according to faith (Heb. 11:4). Cain offered his worship according to his talent, as a farmer. God was pleased with Abel's worship, but could not except Cain's.

Is a baker burying her talent when she fails to make a pie for the Lord's Supper? Is a diver burying his talents when he fails to dive into the baptistry?

The use of one's talent in music to justify musical instruments in worship in fact hinders one in developing their talent in singing. The musically talented should use their talents scripturally in worship. They can use it to lead singing, learn new songs, set the right pitch, teach others, write songs, etc.

This argument opens the floodgate to any talent to be used as worship. Every kind of instrument would be authorized based upon the individual's talent. Furthermore, the fisherman would fish. The camper would camp. The striper would strip. The rock climber would climb rocks. All this and every other talent could be used in worship.

Individual talents should not be the standard for what is acceptable worship. What please God and is in Truth should be the standard (John 4:23-24).

Worship is for the purpose of displaying of one's talent.

God is a spirit, therefore He seeks those who will worship Him in spirit. The old brother whose voice squeaks and quivers may make more melody in his heart than some who have excellent voices and never miss a note.

What to do with your talents? Thank God for them. Use them in a godly manner. Never use them as a substitute or addition to the Will of God (R3v. 22:18,19). Never let the use of your talents rob you of heaven. Remember, talents are temporary but worship is forever.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:16,17).

Questions:

1. What is the motivation behind why many Church of Christ used vocal music only to worship God?
2. What kind of worshiper is God seeking?
3. What are the three purposes of singing in worship?
4. Can instrumental music accomplish the goals of singing listed above? Explain.
5. Why is its use considered lawlessness?
6. Why is instrumental music in worship vain or will worship?
7. From whence does a Christian derive their faith?
8. What is the Law of Exclusion? What does this have to do with the use of musical instruments in worship?
9. What is the consequence for adding to God's Word?
10. Why would the use of musical instruments in worship be considered a presumptuous sin?

11. True False The Holy Spirit did not bring to the apostles a remembrance the use of mechanical music or guide them to use it or to declare it as part of the whole counsel of God.
12. In your own words explain the argument from the silence of the scriptures used to justify the use of instrumental music in worship.
13. Why couldn't Noah use oak, pine, maple wood to build the ark?
14. Why could Jesus not be a priest after the order of Aaron?
15. If instrumental music is authorized in worship today because it was used in the Old Testament, then what else would be authorized for use today just because it was approved of or allowed in Old Testament?
16. True False If God can be worshiped in Heaven with instrumental music, He can be worship in the same way in the church on earth.
17. Are musical instruments sometimes mentioned in Revelation in a figurative sense?
18. How does the Talent Argument open the floodgate to any talent to be used as worship.?

Application & Discussion:

1. What additional arguments can be used from the scripture showing that the use of instrumental music in worship is not approved by God?
2. What are some other arguments which are used by some to justify the use of musical instruments in worship today?
3. Explain how Nadab and Abihu violated God's law of silence and exclusion when they offer "*strange fire*" on the altar of incense in Lev. 10:1-3?

What Does the Bible Say About...

Using Applause in Worship

As the preacher steps to the pulpit the congregation applauds. A teenager is baptized and receives a stand oblation. A stirring song is sung which moves the congregation to such joy that they respond by clapping their hands. To some this is merely a joyful way of expressing delight in religious devotion. To others this applauding is like something you would see at a basketball game or at theatrical performances. At a Florida College Chorus performance a few years ago the audience was asked beforehand not to applaud after religious songs. Why? What's the big deal?

Although applause is not dealt with in the New Testament, please note that the clapping of hands in worship and times of devotion had been known to be a problem in the early church. According Schaff's HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

"The emperor (Constantine) diligently attended divine worship...And he even himself composed and delivered discourses to his court. ...General invitations were issued, and the citizens flocked in great crowds to the palace to hear the imperial preacher, who would in vain try to prevent their loud applause by pointing to heaven as the source of his wisdom." (VOL. 3, P. 34).



"Chrysostom mourns over the theatrical customs, such as loud clapping in applause, which the Christians at Antioch and Constantinople brought with them into the church" (p. 377). Even the apostate Julian complained "The spectators at his sacrifices came not for devotion, but from curiosity, and grieved the devout emperor by their rounds of applause, as if he were simply a theatrical actor of religion" (p. 377).

"Pulpit eloquence...reached a high point in the Greek church...But it also often degenerated there into artificial rhetoric, declamatory bombast, and theatrical acting. Hence the abuse of frequent clapping and acclamations of applause among the people. As at this day, so in that, many went to church not to worship God, but to hear a celebrated speaker, and left as soon as the sermon was done. The sermon, they said, we can hear only in the church, but we can pray as well at home. Chrysostom often raised his voice against this in Antioch and in Constantinople." (p. 473).

This demonstrates that the most enlightened and spiritually-minded men of the third through sixth centuries unanimously rejected the use of applause in worship. Since these men are not religious authorities the answer to our inquiring must lie elsewhere.

Changes are sometimes refreshing. We've all benefitted from some changes in the order of worship. Are some making much to do about nothing? What does God want?

First, let us look at some of the arguments for applause in worship. Some argue that the aversion some have to hand clapping is nothing more than old "Church of Christ" ritualism and tradition. Proponents go so far as to argue

that hand clapping is an expedient. The general charge is that our worship is without feeling. Thus, various emotional stimuli should be added to aid us in expressing these emotions. This idea of applause being an expedient for worship will be dealt with later in our study.

Still others will argue: "If we can applaud a well delivered political speech, clap our hands in approval for a talented athlete at a ball game, and give a standing oblation for a singer's performance how much more does Jesus Christ deserve our applause"? However, this argument proves too much. After all, we eat hot dogs to celebrate a ball game. If we can eat black-eyes peas and hog jowl to celebrate New Year's Day, why not the Lord's Supper. If we would pull pranks to celebrate April Fool's Day, how much more should we pull pranks in worship unto God? If we shoot fireworks to celebrate Independence Day, how much more should we shoot fireworks to celebrate our independence from sin. The illustrations can be multiplied ad infinitum.

The point is put forth that clapping your hands is just another way of saying "Amen". Yet, consider the adulteress upon whom the priest uttered a curse. By the Law of Moses she was required to say, "Amen, Amen" (Num. 5:11-31). Could you imagine her applauding instead? The fact is, applause does not mean the same thing as "Amen" ("so be it"). If they are parallel in meaning then clapping our hands after prayer would be just the same as if we said "Amen". While working with a couple of brethren in Korea a few years ago, I found that it was their custom to say "Amen" at the end of each scripture reading. Would clapping be parallel? Many epistles end with "Amen". How do you communicate hand clapping in writing?

Additionally some have claimed that "if we can change the holy kiss to a handshake (Rom. 16:16), then we can change 'amen' to applause." To kiss as a form of greet is a custom not a command. The Bible does speak out in a way to regulate certain customs. Christians in certain parts of the world still use the kiss as a form of greeting so long as it is a holy kiss, that is, not the hypocritical kiss, like that of Judas (Mk. 14:44) or of Joab (2 Sam. 20:9) then it meets God's approval. "Amen" is not a greeting or is the kiss a form of worship.

Since, the Bible is silent on applause in worship, we must respect the thunderous silence of the Scriptures (1 Pet. 4:11) and not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). Beware of the sin of Jereboam. "the sin of Jeroboam with which he caused Israel to sin" (1 Kgs 12:33; 13:34; 15:30,34). The sin of worshiping God Jeroboam's way or to apply it to our situation today, it is the sin of worshiping God our way.

Applause Violates the Silence of the Scriptures

The New Testament is completely silent on the subject of hand-clapping and applause. When God is silent we are to respect the thunderous silence of God. The story of Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, serve well as examples. These men were priests of God who served in the Tabernacle as God had instructed. One day, for some reason unknown to us, they decided to use strange or profane fire to burn incense in worship to God instead of obtaining fire from the altar as God has instructed. "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.' "So Aaron held his peace." (Lev. 10:1-3).

The Hebrew writer used the argument that when God's Law says nothing it authorizes nothing. "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." (Heb. 7:14). The tribe of Judah was excluded from the priesthood. Not because God had said, "Thou shalt not have a priest from the tribe of Judah", but because He specified priest of the tribe of Levi, thus automatically excluding priests from Judah.

Silence does not give consent. When the Bible says nothing there is a red light not a green light. If the silence of the New Testament authorizes applause then it also authorizes boos, hisses, jeers, stomping, etc.

Still some will argue, "Show me in the Bible where it says: 'Thou shalt not clap or applaud in worship'". However, the burden of proof is clearly on the one who advocates applause in worship.

Applause Opens up New Testament Worship to Old Testament Practices

It is true that clapping was authorized in the Old Testament era. In 2 Kings 11:12 there was a clap of the hands at the anointing of a king. This however was not an act of worship. Yet, in Psalm 47:1-5 the Jews were clapping, shouting, and blowing the trumpet in praise to God who demonstrated that "He is a great King over all the earth" by

defeating the enemies of Israel. In addition to these are metaphorical references to clapping connected to worship unto God. Rivers clap, men sing & play the harp (Ps. 98:8). Trees clap, mountains and hills sing (Is. 55:12).

The minute we start using the Old Testament to authorize our worship during New Testament times the floodgates are open wide to all that the Old Testament teaches with regard to worship. Could the same thinking that would allow applause also allow the instrument to be used with singing? David danced when the ark was moved to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:14). Who would justify a dance around the Lord's Table? Whatever condemns the instrument or dance for us today, condemns applause. Why not open those gates a little wider and allow animal sacrifices, polygamy and a separate priesthood? When the Jews who were converted to Christianity tried to bind circumcision upon the Gentile converts as well as other parts of the Law, Paul warned them saying they had "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:3). When Jesus died the Old Testament was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14).

Applause is an Inexpedient Means of Expressing Joy

As mentioned in the previously applause in worship has been defended as an expedient way of expressing joy, that is, clapping is a aid in carrying out the command to be joyful. Applause is to joy like a song book is to singing. Others say, clapping is like tapping the toe. Singing implies rhythm. In order for something to be expedient is must not violate the Biblical rules of expediency. 1) It first must be lawful (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). 2) Expedients must be an aid to a general command not an addition to God's Word (Rev. 22:18,19). 3) There is no room for an expedient when God has specified what He wants. If He commands us to "Sing", than another type of music not specified is unlawful (Js. 5:13). Clapping is another form of music other than singing. Clapping is a form of percussion music. 4) Expedients must edify (1 Cor. 10:23-33). 5) Expedients must not offend the conscience of a brother (1 Cor. 10:32; Rom. 14:12-23). Applause does not meet these rules of expedience, but violates them.

To use clapping as an expedient opens the floodgates. In the Blakey-Highers Debate, Given O. Blakey argued: "worship is a right thing to do and there is no wrong way to do it". So, why not use Dr. Pepper to aid us in partaking the Lord Supper? Or as Tibetan monks do use a prayer wheel to aid in praying. Should someone who wants to praise God with applause or whistling or shouting after he partakes of the bread, and again after he partakes of the fruit of the vine? Could one "hiss" or "boo" if an impenitent brother is withdrawn from? Why would anyone want to establish an example in the minds of our youth or others that could and would lead them down some wrong road in the future?

Fails to Distinguish Between that which is Holy and that which is Common

God is holy, that is, separate from sin or separate from everyday or common use. Worship of God is in a class by itself. Only in the Lord's Supper do we eat a meal that is not designed to satisfy physical hunger. The Corinthians profaned this holy supper by making it into a common meal. We pray to God, not to Elvis. In giving, we are to do so cheerfully, not grudgingly. The I.R.S. does not require this attitude when we pay our taxes. In singing to God we are to "make melody in the heart" (Col. 3:16). This is not required in secular singing. Anyone wishing to honor the Holy God in worship must do so without debasing Him with common everyday honor such as we do when we honor a man with applauding.

God has always required a distinction between the holy and the unholy, the sacred and the secular (the common) "And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek. 44:23). If I were to use the good china bowl to feed the dog, build a sand castle, drain the oil from the car, etc. my wife would have a fit and rightly so. The good china bowl is special and is honored by being placed in the dining room buffet and used only at the dinner table for special occasions. There are other cheap bowls or common containers that can be used for feeding the dog, draining the oil, etc.

Furthermore, if you really want to honor God in worship, than worship Him with service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28-29). Worship Him in "spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23,24).

Applause Presumptuously Assumes that God Likes what Man Likes

We cannot presume God likes what we like or what pleases us will please God. True worshipers please God and a true worshiper is one who worships in spirit and truth. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. "God is Spirit,

and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23,24).

Once we use what pleases mere men as the standard for worshipping God we open the floodgates to every possible personal preference. Several years ago a church in Richardson, Texas had a stripper come and perform her act during worship. The 200 plus member composed of men, women and children along with their preacher were pleased with it. The stripper said that she wanted to do an entire service to praise God in exotic dance. Those who promote the use of applause would cry out that this is going too far and that they would never do something like this. However, one cannot pull the lever opening the floodgates with one hand and try to stop the flow with the other.

Applause Focuses on the Wrong Object of Worship

About 260 A.D. there was an elder of the church at Antioch names Paul of Samosata. He loved "exorbitant praise and applause" for what he did both within and without the assembly. (Credibility of Gospel History, Vol. 2, P. 666F). Applause must have a object. Do you regularly stop what you are doing and just clap your hands together for an extended period of time just to praise God or to express your joy about something without a human object? When it comes to modern day applause in worship the object is not praising God, but praising men. Approval for someone's performance by clapping their hands for an extended period of time. The louder and the longer the applause the more approval one shows.

The proper view of New Testament worship has God as the audience and those who assemble for worship on the stage. God is the only proper object of worship. Christ said, "For it is written, `You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" (Matt. 4:10).

Applause Supplants the Traditions of the Apostles with the Traditions of Men

A church bulletin in Toledo proclaimed that their innovative forms of worship were "breaking tradition" because "Church shouldn't be boring." Many of those who advocate applause in worship condemn their opponents for wanting merely to follow the traditions of the church. Consider for a moment that some traditions are good. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." These are "traditions" taught and commanded by the inspired apostles and prophets of God. In contrast, some traditions are condemned. In Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus condemns the Pharisees for using the traditions of the elders in demanding that His disciples should not eat with unwashed hands. "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: `These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" They are condemned because are traditions of mere men and as a result they make for vain or empty worship.

Now, into which type of traditions does applause in worship fall into: the traditions of the apostles or the traditions of men?

Applause Promotes Emotionalism and Egotism

It is a dangerous thing to presume that others have lost their spirituality because they continue to say many of the same words in their public prayers or because they always have two songs, a prayer and another song before the sermon. When one begins to think that his worship is better than that of others because his worship different in some physical way, his own is defiled because of his egotistical attitude.

Likewise, emotionalism does not determine ones level of spirituality. In the Warlick-Stark Debate, Stark thought of worship as the emotion of the soul and that it might "produce singing, shouting, praising, leaping, dancing, hand clapping, or thanksgiving and such should not be suppressed by man made rules." Mere human emotions should not be used as the test of worship which is pleasing and acceptable to God. Anyone who argues: "My worship is acceptable to God. I feel good afterwards because I know I have done rightly" is putting the cart before the horse. Feelings can often be deceptive. They may tell us what is in our hearts, but they cannot show us what is in the heart or mind of God. To know what is in the mind of God we have to study God's revelation, the Bible. The Bible reveals nothing about clapping as a pleasing mode of Worship.

Our opposition to applause in worship does not exclude feeling. By all means praise God with the emotion of praise and joy in your heart, but not with the unscriptural clapping of hands. "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this...but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Lk. 10:20).

Questions:

1. True False Early Christians approved of applause in worship.
2. How do some argue that clapping is a expedient to worship?
3. Is clapping your hands is just another way of saying "Amen"? Explain.
4. True False Silence of the Bible about applause in worship gives consent.
5. List the five rules of expediency.
6. How is clapping in worship debasing that which is holy with that which is common?
7. Explain how singing, giving, eating of the Lord's Supper and talking to God in prayer is holy.
8. Why is worshiping God in a way pleasing to us not a good idea?
9. How does applause often alter the object of one's worship?
10. How is clapping in worship a tradition of men?

11. Does one's level of emotion determine whether or not one's worship is pleasing to God or scriptural?
12. Explain who feelings can be a deceptive guide in life?

Application & Discussion:

1. Would using clapping to accompany our singing be okay? Please explain.
2. What harm is there in clapping when we agree with a good point made in Bible class or in a sermon?

Homework: Find scriptural and appropriate ways to express your joy and appreciation in religious settings.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Faithful Attendance

How do you increase your chance of a long life? Have you heard the news? If you want to greatly increase your chance for a long life you will be interested in the following: do not ride in an automobile or get in the way of one. They cause 20% of all fatal accidents. You should not stay at home. Seventeen percent of all accidents happen in the home. Do not walk around on the street. 14% of all accidents occur to pedestrians. Do not travel by air, rail or ship. 16% of all accidents are the result of this type of traveling. Only .0001% of all deaths occur at worship, and these are related to previous physical disorders, such as heart conditions, etc.

There are many other good reasons for attending.

Faithful Attendance Helps My Relationship with God



★ **My Attendance Shows My Love for God**

Obedience is inherent in true love for God (1 John 5:3).

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15). If I show love to God by attendance, I show hate by non-attendance!

Am I loving God with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength when I refuse to worship Him as commanded? Furthermore, one who truly loves God does not ask if he must attend, his love compels him.

★ **My Attendance Puts Me in God's Presence**

Christ has promised to be there whenever we are gathered together in His name (Mt. 18:20). Christ has never forsaken an assembly, but for us to forsake an assembly is to forsake Him. Someone asked Emily Post, "What is the correct procedure when one is invited to the White House and has a previous engagement?" She answered, "An invitation to lunch or dine at the white House is a command, and automatically cancels any other engagement." The King of kings and Lord of lords deserves first place in your appointment book.

★ **My Attendance Provides Me an Opportunity to Worship God**

Attendance provides us an opportunity to worship God with the worship that He seeks (Jn. 4:23,24). Certainly the Psalmist in the one hundredth Psalm counted the opportunities to worship God a privilege. *"I was glad when they said to me, 'let us go into the house of the Lord'"* (Ps. 122:1).

★ **My Attendance Shows My Loyalty to God**

In a sense we are making a confession of Christ by our attendance but a denial of Him by non-attendance (Mt. 10:32,33). As Peter and the rest of the disciples did the night He was betrayed, except John.

We betray our allegiance by non-attendance. The empty tomb proves Christianity while the empty church denies it.

★ **My Attendance Expresses My Thanks to God**

Did you ever experience such joy in life that you wanted to say, "Thank you," to someone? We reorganize God as the giver of all good (Js. 1:17).

When you look at Christ's death for us, you should be moved with a spirit of thanksgiving, which

is to be expressed both privately and publicly. Christians should assemble upon the first day of every week and remember the Lord for what He has done for us (I Cor. 11:23-26). However, the empty pew says, "Someone does not appreciate Christ's sacrifice."

Faithful Attendance Helps Others

My Attendance Encourages/Edifies Others

"Edify" means to build up. How could a great skyscraper be built if the construction crew does not come to work? How can my brethren be built up if they do not show up? No company has been built up by not making attendance mandatory for its workers. There are many, many "one another" commandments in the scriptures. Most of these can be fulfilled by assembling together. You are to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). Everyone present imparts to one another (Eph. 4:16). You are to encourage the faint-hearted and support the weak (I Th. 5:14). You are to each and admonish one another in songs (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

My Attendance Lovingly Provokes Others to Do Good Works

Attendance helps us to provoke one another in love and good works as we fellowship together. *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Heb. 10:24,25). "Provoke" involves the idea to "sharpen" hence to "stimulate" to greater faith. Deliberate absentees show a disregard for efforts and feelings of the faithful brethren! Forsaking the assembly discourages rather than encourages.

My Attendance Sets a Good Example

By every act of my life I am influencing someone to serve either God or the devil. Let your light shine by putting a spotlight on Christ in a dark world (Mt. 5:14,16). Bad examples discourage others from worshipping. It makes some question the reality of religion and others to think the non-attender is a pretender. By forsaking one becomes a stumbling block to the babes in Christ (Mt. 18:6).

My Attendance Helps My Family

Attendance assists parents in training up their children (Dt. 6:4-7; Eph. 6:4), so that they will not depart from God when they are old (Pr. 22:6). A boy brought up in church is seldom brought up in court.

Attendance shows family priorities. It is hard to convince children that the church is the most important thing in the world when you are negligent about attending the services and supporting its work. Your absence gives your children a distorted sense of values.

My Attendance Helps the Lost

Attending is a testimony to those outside of Christ. It shows the lost that being a Christian means something to us (Tit. 2:7,8; 2 Cor. 3:2,3). They think, "It really means something to that person. Perhaps I should look into this more seriously."

Attending is an opportunity to invite the lost. When you invite a sinner to services he will look for you the first thing, if he comes.

Absentees make it harder for the preacher to preach to the lost, because it is hard to preach to empty pews. To the non-member the empty pew says: "Regular attendance is neither necessary or worthwhile."

Faithful Attendance Helps the Church

Attendance Helps the Church to Exist and Function

The mission of the church can only be accomplished through assembling. The church has work it must do therefore it has to exist collectively in order to do that work. This requires faithful attendance on the part of the individual Christian.

Non-attenders undermine the agreement to work together. If some can stay home, all can. If all failed to assemble where would the church be and how could it fulfill its mission? Without "U" an important element is missing in Bible St_dy and there is a vacancy in ch_rch without "U".

† **Attendance Helps the Church Grow**

The empty pew whispers to visitors: "There is no interest here; if I were you I wouldn't come back." Based on your attendance will there be a church in your community in 20 years?

† **Attendance Encourages Leaders and Fellow-Workers**

Your attendance encourages the elders. They set up the times of the assemblies in order to feed the flock (Ac. 20:28). Each member of the church should participate in the feeding program of the elders.

They are accountable for our spiritual life (Heb. 13:17). Non-attendance makes it harder for them to do their job. When we do not attend, we disobey them that have rule over us (Heb. 13:17). We owe these men and the church our presence at every service.

To the preacher the empty pew says, "God's Word is not powerful. I do not need it." Empty pews can preach a louder and more persuasive sermon than any man can. It takes the combination of the man in the pulpit and the person in the pew to carry on the services.

If each member followed the "golden Rule" as Christ laid down, we would have no problem such as absenteeism (Mt. 7:12).

† **My Attendance Facilitates Fellowship**

"Fellowship" means "joint participation" or "partnership". The church is an army (Eph. 6:11-18) joined together to fight a common foe. AWOL's (absent without official leave) and deserters weaken any army and its cause.

Paul taught that evil companionship will destroy good intentions. The opposite of that would be: good companionship with build character and reputation. We ought to attend every service because we need a closer association with other Christians.

By attending and giving (1 Cor. 16:1,2) we have fellowship in the work. By not attending one fails to give as commanded upon the first day of the week.

† **My Attendance Advances the Influence of the Church**

What's the difference between the atheist who supports no church and the member who will not support the one to which he belongs? Isn't your absence from worship a vote to close the doors of the church? Non-attenders cannot pray for the success of the church without being hypocrites. Non-attendance shows one to be a hypocrite.

Faithful Attendance Helps Me

⇒ **Attending Brings Me Blessings**

All spiritual blessings in Christ are also in the church (Eph. 1:3). Failure to engage in worship with others in the acts of worship deprives one of many great blessings. Singing teaches and admonishes. Praying with and for one another. Partaking of a fellowship meal. Hearing the Word which makes one wise unto salvation. Giving cheerfully unto God.

⇒ **Attending Helps Me to Be Fruitful**

Paul said for Christians to "*be ready unto every good work*" and to "*abound in good works*" (Tit. 3:1,8). To fail to do what one knows is a good work is to sin (Js. 4:17). To be unfruitful is not to be a disciple (Jn. 15:8). To be unfruitful is to be destroyed in the end (Jn. 15:6).

⇒ **Attending Helps Me Grow**

Services of the church are designed to provide spiritual food. If I am hungering and thirsting after righteousness and if I desire the sincere milk of the Word that I may grow then I will be at every service (Mt. 5:6; 1 Pet. 2:2,3). Some have failed to grow as they should. These same people have failed to attend as they should (Heb. 5:11-14).

⇒ **Attending Strengthens Me**

Remember, "*I can do all things through Him that strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13), but if you are separated from Him you are without your source of strength. Show me a one-hour-a-week Christian and I will show you a weak Christian.

⇒ **Attending Prepares Me for Eternal Salvation**

Death might come knocking when we should have been at services. Attending helps me to remain faithful till death (Rev. 2:11). Furthermore it helps me to be prepared for Christ's return. We don't know

when He shall come (Mt. 25:36,44). It is safe to attend every service. Dangerous risks are taken by being absent, Christ may return or death may come. Remember, "heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people." If we don't like attending worship services, we won't like heaven.

⇒ **Attending Helps Me Overcome Trials and Temptations**

The Word is our weapon against temptation. We all need sword practice and to be fortified against falling away. Just remember, when you neglect to attend a service you are playing right into the hands of Satan himself.

⇒ **Attending Assists Me in Forming Good Habits**

Non-attendance is a bad habit. In the first century the "*habit of some*" was to forsake the assembling of the saints (Heb. 10:25). When you miss one you have made it easier to miss the next and the next... Conversely, by coming once you make it easier to come again and again and again...

Newsweek researched church attendance in America and discovered the 40% attend services of some sort on a weekly basis. Where are the other 60%. Perhaps, they are attending the most popular place of worship in the world: St. Mattress. Hopefully, all Christians will be able to understand the multitude of reasons given in this lesson for them to get out of bed and get to church.

Must I Attend?

Is it a sin to miss just one service of the church? Absolutely not! However it is a sin to forsake the assembling of the saints. "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*" (Heb. 10:25).

This passage in Hebrews is obviously not speaking of the sick and shut-ins, those on vacation, or having to work in support of their families, and others who are also hindered beyond their control. This is speaking of those who are able to come and choose not to show up at services.

Some will argue, "but this passage does not say Sunday night or Wednesday night." True, but it does not say "Sunday morning" either. Some reinterpret this passage to say "do not forsake the Sunday morning assembly." Remember it is not talking about an "assembly," but the act of "*assembling*." Thus it includes all actions of the saints assembling together, whether it be Sunday night and Wednesday night as well as Sunday morning. For example, a boss tells his work crew not to forsake the assembling together with the other workers. When? Whenever, the other workers are assembling to work. If the worker, does not show up when the others are assembling together, he has forsaken his boss. He may be fired. Two mistakes are made with regard to this verse. First, thinking it says forsake not the "assembly", but it actually says "*assembling*." Thinking it meant the Sunday morning only, when it means any time the church meets.

When does forsaking the assembling of the saints become a sin? If one doesn't sin when he indifferently misses just one service, how many times does he have to forsake before he sins? 2,4,6, or 100 times? The truth of the matter is that if it is a sin to wilfully miss a 100 assemblies, it is a sin to forsake just one service. If not, why not?

Brother Ben Putinoff, for example, misses an assembly, but no one takes any notice of it; he misses eight or ten and the church begins to wonder. Finally, he is absent a whole year, and the elders go out to talk with him. What if he should ask for the specific time at which he became a sinner? What could they say? How many times do you have to steal before it's stealing? How many times does someone have to commit adultery before they become a fornicator? As clearly as the New Testament teaches us not to commit adultery or not to steal or not to murder, it teaches "*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*".

Still others will ask: "Do I have to go to church?" This is like asking,

- "Do I have to study and learn God's Word?"
- "Do I have to talk to God in prayer with my fellow worshipers?"
- "Do I have to remember his death for my sins by partaking of the Lord's Supper with the saints?"
- "Do I have to be about my Father's business?"
- "Do I have to try to save my brother from hell?"

- "Do I have to exhort and provoke one another to love and good works?"
- "Do I have to give back to God on the first day of the week when the saints are gathered together?"

All these commandments associated with attendance are essential. Remember, God has given no non-essential commands!

The Hebrew writer goes on to warn those who forsake the assembling of the saints of several consequences.

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:26-29).

These ancient brethren were being tempted to renounce Christ, such would be to sin willfully. One of the symptoms of a heart about to renounce Christ is the habit of non-attendance. A priest who neglected his duty was at the Tabernacle was given the death penalty. To willfully forsake the assembling together is to trample under foot the very Son of God. What if someone did this to your son? Would they be guilty of sin?

If a Christian continues to forsake, there is nothing to look forward to but Judgment. *"For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb. 10:30,31). If you were confronted with a record of your attendance for the past year, you may be astonished at the number of times you were absent from services. The Lord keeps a complete and perfect record of all my works. I will be judged by both the book containing Hebrews 10:25 and the record of my deeds both good and bad (2 Cor. 5:10). If you have missed a Sunday morning service when you could have been there you have forsaken the assembling of the saints or a Sunday night or Sunday morning Bible study or Wednesday night or a Gospel meeting night.

If you want to find another passage which will help support that idea that forsaking an assembling of the saints is a sin, try James 4:17: *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."* Assembling with the saints is doing good: encouraging others, worshiping God, being edified, etc. It is doing good, therefore not to do it is a sin. When one has a knowledge of what is right in the discharge of one's duty, but willfully refuses to fulfill it, then that is sin. In light of this one needs to ask themselves: "Am I sinning by not attending Sunday evening and Wednesday evening, if I am able to attend?"

Questions:

Multiple Choice

1. Loving God means you must a) keep His commandments b) tell everybody that you love Him c) have a warm feeling about Him in your heart.
2. He is the one who never, ever misses a service. a) Christ b) preacher c) someone looking for a handout.
3. He is seeking true worshipers. a) Devil b) God c) preacher

True/False

4. ___ One can show their gratitude to God and still chose never to worship Him or partake of the Lord's Supper.
5. ___ Forsaking the assembling sets a bad example before the world.
6. ___ Parents choosing to be absence gives their children a distorted sense of values.
7. ___ Faithful attendance has nothing to do with our effort to reach the lost in this world.
8. ___ Without faithful attendance the local church could not exist or function.

Matching

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 9. ___ Elders | a. Joint participation |
| 10. ___ Fellowship | b. Forsaking the assembling of saints |
| 11. ___ All spiritual blessings | c. Feed the flock |
| 12. ___ Sincere milk of the Word | d. Found in Christ and in church |
| 13. ___ Time of Christ's return | e. Helps us grow |
| 14. ___ Habit of some | f. Unknown |

Application & Discussion

1. List ways we encourage and edify by attending?
2. How can attending help us in overcome day to day trials and temptations?
3. What things can be done to improve the attendance at this local congregation?

Homework: Make a list of those members were are absent this Sunday and Wednesday and contact them to see why and what you might do to assist them in their attendance.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Faith & Work's Role in Salvation

Salvation & Works

Humanists may argue that no god exist to save us, man must save himself. Yet, there is a God and salvation from sin can only be achieved by one of three ways. First, live a sinless life, so there is never a need to be saved. In this sense salvation would not require Christ to be one's Savior or would it necessitate grace. However, *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). All men sin. *"The wages of sin is death"* therefore man needs *"the gift of God"* which is *"eternal life"* (Romans 6:23). Second, the sinner can attempt to earn salvation. Islam teaches one can earn salvation from Allah by accumulating more good deeds in life to outweigh the bad deeds. However, it is by *"grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"* (Eph. 2:8,9). The third manner is to be given salvation. This gift can come with or without conditions. Universalism teaches all men will be saved without any conditions *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it"* (Matthew 7:13,14). The Bible teaches there is a condition which involves man's faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. *"Jesus said, 'therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins'"* (John 8:24).



Many denominations teach that faith is the only condition for man to receive salvation. The doctrine of "justification by faith only" is the offspring of the famous German reformer, Martin Luther. Luther was so controlled by this idea that he took the liberty of adding the word *allein* (German for "alone") to the word "faith" in Romans 3:28: *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by(allein, alone) faith apart from the deeds of the law."* No German translator would agree with Luther. Luther was motivated to teach faith only salvation in response to the work oriented means of salvation by the Catholic church.

Most Protestant denominations agreed with Luther's teachings on faith only. The Methodist Discipline states: "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort" (Article IX, "Of the Justification of Man"). The Jehovah's Witnesses teach: "The only ground of salvation mentioned in the Scriptures is faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Lord. 'By grace are ye saved through faith.'" (Vol. 1, p. 100). In the Church of the Nazarene creed we read: "that believers are to be sanctified wholly - through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Manual, 1956, 36). The Episcopal church believes: "Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort" (Article 2 of Episcopal Articles of Religion). Finally, the Baptist denomination claims: "All you have to do is believe and he will save you: also, 'Justification, the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life - are solely through faith'" (Church manual for Baptist Churches, J. M. Pendleton, p. 48).

However, these same denominations will also claim that one is saved by grace only. The Baptists: "We believe the Scriptures teach that salvation of sinners is wholly of grace" (The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches - Articles of Faith, item 4). The Presbyterians: "...their justification is only of free grace: that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners" (The Confession of Faith - Presbyterian Church - Chapter 13, Para. 3). Although the Lutheran church claims salvation by faith only, their "Lutheran theologians, on the other hand, insisted that salvation is wholly a free gift of God's grace" (What Lutherans Believe, Warburg Press, Chapter 9).

Much of the confusion over salvation has to do with an apparent contradiction. Passages like Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, and 2 Timothy 1:6 appear to teach salvation by faith only. On the other hand James 2 states that we are saved by works and faith: *"by works a man is justified and not by faith only"* (James 2:24). Is this a real contradiction or is there some other solution to the problem.

The Bible does not contradict itself. Man just fails to make the distinction between the works of man and the works of God. James 2:24 shows three doctrines to be false: grace only, faith only, and works only. There are many different types of works listed in the Bible. The Bible mentions the works of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:3); the works of Satan (Jn. 8:41,42); the works of darkness (Rom. 13:12); the works of the flesh, Gal. 5:19-21); the works of ungodliness (Jude 15); and the works of the Law of Moses also called *"works of the law"* (Rom. 3:28). Paul wrote, *"knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified"* (Galatians 2:16). The Hebrew writer says, *"for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"* (Hebrews 10:4). The other works which cannot save are works of personal merit. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Titus 3:5). Works of righteousness *"which we have done"* cannot save. None of these types of works having anything to do with salvation from sin.

In contrast, there are works of God, works of righteousness, and *"work of faith"* (1 Thess. 1:3). When God sent Peter to preach salvation to Cornelius the apostle said, *"in truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him"* (Acts 10:34,35). Who does God accept? The sinner who does two things: fears God and works righteousness. Obedience is important for salvation. *"For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified"* (Romans 2:13)

What about the apparent contradiction in Ephesians 2:8,9: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."* What is the *"gift of God"*? It is not grace. The word "grace," means "unmerited favor," it is a free gift so Paul would be saying a *"free gift is a gift of God."* This gift of God is not faith. However commentator John MacArthur wrote,

"Faith is presented as a gift from God in 2 Peter 1:1... When we accept the finished work of God on our behalf, we act by the faith supplied by God's grace. That is the supreme act of human faith, the acts which, though it is ours, is primarily God's-His gift to us out of His grace. When a person chokes or drowns and stops breathing, there is nothing he can do. If he ever breathes again it will be because someone else starts him breathing. A person who is spiritually dead cannot even make a decision of faith unless God first breathes into him the breath of spiritual life. Faith is simply breathing the breath that God's grace supplies. Yet, the paradox is that we must exercise it and bear the responsibility if we do not (cf. John 5:40). (Ephesians, 60-61).

Yet the Greek grammar will not support the idea that Paul is saying faith is the gift of God by grace. "Faith" is feminine, while "that" is neuter. Bible faith is the human response to divine testimony. *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). *"It is the gift of God"* refers neither to "grace" or to "faith". It refers to the whole process of salvation by *"grace...through faith"*. The gift of salvation cannot be bought – it is a free gift. However, it does have conditions: hearing to produce faith (Rom. 10:17), confession of faith before men (Rom. 10:9,10), repentance of sins (Acts 2:38) and baptism to wash away sins (Acts 22:16).

While the Church of Christ believes in the necessity of both faith and grace for salvation (Heb. 11:6; Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1), the New Testament church also holds that one must be baptized to be saved. Many denominations have falsely accused the church of believing in salvation by works. They claim *"salvation by works rather than by the grace of God"* (*"The Truth About the Church of Christ"*, p. 17, Hugh F. Pyle). *"If it is necessary for man to work in order to be saved, then salvation is not of grace."*

The real contradiction is that so-many denominations are claiming that salvation is by faith only and also claim it is by grace only. The term "only" is from the Greek word *monos* and is defined as, "alone, solitary" (W.E. Vine). "Only" means solely or alone, that is, "exclusively." If one is saved by grace only,

faith is excluded. If one is saved by faith only, grace is excluded. However, one is saved by both the grace of God, by faith, and by other works of God.

Consequences of Salvation by Faith Only

Most denominations claim a sinner is saved by faith only. Yet James 2:17-26 claims that one is saved by works and not by faith alone. This appears to contradict Paul's teaching that salvation is not of works. However, as explained above, the works of God, faith or righteousness are conditions of salvation. As opposed to works of the Law or works of man. Martin Luther handled this apparent contradiction by simply disregarding the book of James by calling it, "a right strawy epistle."

However, if one strives to be saved by faith or grace only there are some inevitable consequences he will have to face.

Consequences With Being Saved by Faith Only

A small boy asked the preacher: "sir, what can I do to be saved?" The preacher replied: "Son, you're too late!" "What!" exclaimed the boy, "too late to be saved?" "No," said the preacher: "too late to do anything. You see, son, Jesus did it all two thousand years ago."

However, He did not do everything. One's faith is involved in salvation. James 2:24 reads, *"by works a man is justified and not by faith only."*

If Saved by Faith Only Then...

◆ Saved With a Dead Faith

If one is saved by "faith only," then one is saved with a dead faith. James said, *"faith apart from works is dead"* (2:17). Just as the human body may exist in either the living state or in the dead state, so faith may also be either alive or dead. Living faith, like the living body, is manifest by action. Dead faith is like a dead body when it is inactivate. James thus stated that just as a dead body is useless without the spirit, so dead faith is useless without the works of obedience to Christ's divine law.

◆ Saved With an Imperfect Faith

James went on to argue, *"do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"* (James 2:22). Faith alone is incomplete. One must not only claim to believe in Christ as the Son of God, he must respond to or act in accord with the belief. This requires obedience to God.

◆ Saved Without Being Justified

The phrase "faith only" appears only once in the Bible. In this passage the Word of God claims one is not saved or justified by "faith only." *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24). "Faith only" will not justify; faith plus works will justify. James used the same word "only" (monos) once more in his letter. *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"* (James 1:22). It is not a question of whether faith justifies or is essential to salvation or not. The issue is whether faith alone will save. Not all works will justify or save the sinner. James does not affirm such. He does ask two rhetorical questions concerning to great examples of faith. First, he speaks of the faith of Abraham who offered up Isaac. *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?"* (James 2:21). Second, James mentions the faith of Rahab. *"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?"* (James 2:25).

◆ Saved Without a New Birth

One night a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus came to Jesus to ask the way into the kingdom. *"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'"* (John 3:5). If one is saved by faith only, he must be saved without the new birth. This new birth involves being *"born of water"* which is baptism.

• Saved Without Baptism

Denominationalists say, "If you say that one must be baptized in order to be saved, then you would have us saved by men's works." And, "obviously salvation cannot be by grace through faith and still by

partly by baptism. Salvation cannot be both by grace and by works.” Yet Jesus said, *“he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). Faith plus baptism equals salvation. Anything that is commanded of God, is not a work of man, but it is a work of God. *“There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:21)

◆ **Saved Without Obedience**

Although Jesus *“was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”* (Hebrew 5:8,9). Are the actions of obedience considered works? The eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells of the active faith of men and women in the Bible. In every single case their faith was coupled with obedience. Abel who by faith offered a more excellent sacrifice (11:4). Noah who by faith built an ark as God directed (11:7). Noah did not earn salvation by building an ark. The Israelites did not earn the promised land. Every case of Bible conversion in the book of Acts shows that people were saved only when their faith was coupled with the works of obedience to God’s law. Many think that John 3:16 teaches salvation at the point of faith. But the word “believes” according to Thayer’s Lexicon means, “Faith conjoined with obedience.” Paul in writing the book of Romans began and ended the letter by mentioning *“obedience to the faith”* (Rom. 1:5), and *“the obedience of faith”* (Rom. 16:26). So Paul and James do not contradict each other, both teach that faith only will not save.

• **Saved Without Love**

Faith must exist before it can work and it must work through love before it can avail anything. *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love”* (Galatians 5:6). True working or active faith must involve love. Salvation by faith only would omit the necessity of love.

• **Saved Without Repentance**

“Faith only” doctrine would leave out not only baptism but would exclude the necessity of repentance. When on the day of Pentecost Peter condemned the Jews for killing the Son of God, they ask them what could be done. *“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins’”* (Acts 2:38). Jesus warned, *“I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3).

• **Saved Without Confession**

What good is belief in Christ without confessing with one’s mouth before others that He is the Son of God. *“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue”* (John 12:42).

• **Saved Without Faith**

Believe it or not Jesus said that faith is a work. The multitude asked Jesus *“What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”* Jesus answered and said to them, *“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent”* (John 6:28,29). Faith is a work, a work of God. God has commanded us to believe; therefore, believing is a work of God. It is not a work God must do, or will do for us, it is a work we must accomplish.

• **Saved Without Good Works**

If salvation is by faith or grace only, then good works are completely excluded. Doing “good works” are required by the Lord. *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age”* (Titus 2:11,12). The grace of God teaches us how *“we should live.”* We are created in Christ to produce good works. *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”* (Eph. 2:10). “Good Works” are those things taught in the Word. *“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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

A man asked a denominational preacher what needed to be done to be saved. He answered, “Nothing! Jesus did it all two thousand years ago.” When the Jailor asked the same question. Paul did not say “you are too late to do anything, Jesus did it all” (see Acts 16:31-34). When Paul asked the Lord

what He was to do, Jesus sent him to Damascus and sent a preacher named Ananias. Paul was not told to do nothing because everything had already been done by Jesus two thousand years ago. Instead Paul was commanded to *“arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins”* (Acts 22:16).

Salvation is by the grace of God and by the works of God which include: hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized.

Jesus warned, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21). To be saved sinners must hear God’s Word, believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, repent of their sins, confess verbally and publically that Jesus is the Son of God, and be baptized in water.

Questions:

1. List the three ways salvation of sin can be achieved. Which of these is plausible? Why?
2. Is the gift of salvation conditional or unconditional on the part of man?
3. Who popularized salvation by faith only? What motivated him to promote this doctrine?
4. List the other denominations who hold to Luther's view of faith only salvation?
5. Why is it illogical to claim that salvation is by "faith only" while at the same time claiming it is by "grace only"?
6. What is the apparent contradiction between the teachings of Paul and James over the role of faith in salvation?
7. List the types works found in the Bible.
8. What is the gift of God in Ephesians 2:8-9?
9. What are the conditions of salvation?

10. How did Martin Luther view the epistle of James?
11. What is a "*dead faith*"?
12. How is "faith only" an imperfect faith?
13. Where is the only time "*faith only*" found in the Bible? Does it support the view of salvation by faith alone?
14. List passages which claim that baptism saves.
15. Can one be saved without repentance of sin and confession of the deity of Christ? Explain.

Application & Discussion:

1. Look at the context of John 6:29 is faith a work? Explain.
2. Look at Hebrews 11. Explain how obedience faith please God and saves.

Homework: Find someone who believes in salvation by faith only an share James 2:24 with them.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Mary's Role in Salvation

Mariology is "1. the body of belief, doctrine, and opinion concerning the Virgin Mary 2. the study of the person and nature of the Virgin Mary, esp. in reference to her role in the incarnation of God in Christ" (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, p. 867). What role does Mary the mother of Jesus play in the scriptures? No doubt, she was greatly honored by being selected to bring the Christ into this world (Lk. 1:26-35). Consider the number of times she is mentioned in the New Testament:

- Visiting Elizabeth, Lk. 1:39-49; 56.
- Birth of Jesus, Lk. 2:4-7; 15:19.
- Simeon blessing them at the Temple, Lk. 2:33-34.
- Wise men from the East worshipping him, Mt. 2:11.
- Fleeing to Egypt, Mt. 2:14.
- Death of Herod, return to Nazareth, Mt. 2:14.
- Finding 12 year old Jesus at the Temple, Lk. 2:43-51.
- Wedding in Cana of Galilee, Jn. 4:1-5.
- At Capernaum, she and the brothers of Jesus visited Him, Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:20-21.
- Reference to Mary is made by the people of Nazareth, Mt. 13:53-56; Mk. 6:3.
- Death of Jesus, Jn. 19:25-27. John, who was entrusted with her care by Jesus, does not mention her in any of his three epistles or in the book of Revelation.
- Following His resurrection, the disciples awaited the promise of the Holy Spirit, Ac. 1:14. She is mentioned, not first in the list, before the apostles, where the Roman Catholic Church places her, but last, as if she were of less significance than the, Ac. 1:12-14.



Note, Mary is never mentioned by name in any epistle, and only appears four times after the beginning of Christ's personal ministry:

What attitude should we have towards Mary, the mother of Jesus? Some leave the impression that Mary is mentioned on every page of the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church seems to have a preoccupation with Mary. J.D. Conway, *What the Church Teaches*, "nothing is more distinctly Catholic than devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary." Catholicism's Mariology is really Mariolatry "excessive and proscribed veneration of the Virgin Mary; esp. in forms appropriate to God" (ibid). The first example would be that of the immaculate conception.

The Immaculate Conception of Mary

Just what is this doctrine of the "immaculate conception"? On December 8, 1854 the unofficial doctrine, was adopted as an article of faith by the Catholic Church. As a result of a chain of false doctrines began upon the false premise of the doctrine of original sin. Pope Pius IX in 1854: "We declare, pronounce and define: the doctrine that maintains that the most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, by a unique grace and privilege of the omnipotent God, and in consideration of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore must be firmly and constantly held by all the faithful."

Karl Keating, a noted Catholic apologist and writer, says: "The Immaculate Conception means that

Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin. ...Mary was preserved from this defect; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace" (Catholicism & Fundamentalism, p. 270).

This doctrine of original sin states that all men are born in sin because of Adam's original sin in the Garden of Eden. The Knights of Columbus publishes a book which speaks of inherited sin and attempts to explain how the "debts" of Adam were "passed on to his children as a man may pass certain qualities by heredity. First of these defects was, of course, the original sin. Adam's children were born without grace. And all inherited other evils as well..." (The Apostles' Creed).

How could Christ be born of woman and not inherit a sinful nature? In order for Christ to be born sinless, his mother had to be free of Adam's sin. Thus, Mary must have been born without sin.

The fact is, all babies are born without sin. No one has inherited Adam's sin. One may suffer the consequences of another's sin, but guilt is not an inherited quality. For example, a drunken driver may hit a persons and maim him for life. The victim suffers the consequences of the drunkard's sin but in no way does the drunkard's children share the guilt. The Bible never speaks of "inherited sin" instead it says, *"Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die.... The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself"* (Ezek. 18:4; 20).

In addition to this concept of Mary being born with inheriting the sin of Adam, Catholics teach the perpetual perfection of Mary. "Our blessed Mother was free throughout her life from all actual sin, both mortal and venial"(Baltimore Cate., p. 36). The Bible says, *"all have sinned"* (Rom. 3:23). If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, I Jn. 1:8,10. God is Mary's Savior. Why does she need a savior if she is sinless (Lk. 1:46,47). The fact is, only Christ, the Son of God was sinless (I Pet. 2:22). Truly, Mary was born without original sin, but this is nothing special. all people are born innocent. All children are born innocent and without guilt (Ps. 105:37,38; Matthew 18:3,4; 19:14).

Perpetual Virginity of Mary

First, let us clarify the issue. We are not teach that Mary was not a virgin when she conceived her firstborn. Joseph and Mary had not intimate relations with each other until after Jesus was born. She was with child *"before they came together"* (Mt. 1:18). The conflict with Catholicism comes at this point. They claim that she never knew a man, including Joseph, all of her life.

By the General Council of Constantinople in 553 A.D., Mary had received the title "Perpetual Virgin". Again Catholic apologist Karl Keating wrote: "A careful look at the N.T. shows Mary kept her vow and never had any children other than Jesus" (Catholicism and Funda., p. 294). Where did she make this vow?

Some began to teach that not only did Mary conceive without physical relations with a man, but her physical virginity was also not violated in giving birth to Christ. "The Church also proclaims that Mary gave birth to Jesus in a virginal way. 'She brought him forth without loss of virginity, even as she conceived Him without the loss of virginity...it was a miraculous birth.'"

Some early church writers are appealed to as a source of this tradition. Irenaeus (193) and Origin (185-254) taught that Mary never lost her virginity in giving birth to Christ. Clement of Alexandria (215), speaking about the preservation of Mary's virginity, "For certain people say that Mary examined by the midwife after she had given birth was found to be a virgin." (Theotokos, p. 103).

This required an additional miracle than Jesus just being born to a Virgin. Catholics argue, "It is Catholic faith that Mary was a virgin before the divine birth; during it (our Lord was born as miraculously as he passed through the walls of the upper room after his resurrection); and after it - Our lady never had any other children." (Mary - Doctrine for Everyman, p. 14).

The Levitical Law required Mary to remain in the blood her purification for 40 days (Lev. 12:1-5). This Mary did this according to Luke. Matthew also uses the words "born" and "birth" without qualification (1:24,25; 2:1), so does Paul (Gal. 4:4).

No genuine proof exist for the perpetual virginity or miraculous birth of Jesus. Even the Catholic agree that such is not stated in the scriptures

If Mary was a perpetual virgin, what about the tradition of married women following her example? "It is traditional, at the conclusion of the ceremony, for the bride to take a bouquet to the side altar and lay it at the feet of the statue of the Virgin, at the same time praying that she might emulate Mary as a wife and a mother" (Keating, p. 259). Not many men would want their wives to "emulate Mary as a wife".

The Word of God states that married couples are not to refrain from sex except for short mutually agreed periods of separation devoted to fasting and prayer (1 Cor. 7:2-5). Man and wife must fulfill the physical union. Either Mary fulfilled her marriage obligation with Joseph or else she sinned.

Mary and Joseph did consummate their marriage according to Matthew 1:18. The phrase "Before they came together" suggests it and it also implies that sexual union took place as a natural course after the child was born. Note, the word "*until*" in Matthew 1:25 implies a reversal of action.

The scriptures are also clear that Jesus had brothers and sisters. *"Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?"* (Matt. 13:55-56).

This doctrine is based on the idea that virginity is somehow more holy and purer than marriage. Assumes all sexual relations, even in scriptural marriage, carried with it at least an implication of sin. Bishop Siricius wrote to Anastasius (392): "For the Lord Jesus would not have chosen to be Born of a virgin if he had judged that she would be so innocent as to taint the birthplace of the body of the Lord, the home of the eternal king, with the seed of human intercourse." (ISBE:R, Vol. 3, p. 271).

Yet, again in contrast to the Holy Scriptures the union of man and wife is pure and holy. *"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge"* (Heb. 13:4). God instituted marriage (Gen. 2:18-24; 1:28) and like everything he created made, it is very good (1:31). Obviously the origin of this doctrine of men is from an unbiblical view of sex.

The Bodily Assumption of Mary

The Catholic Church teaches after Mary ended her earthly life, she was taken up into heaven in body as well as in soul. "...when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up, body and soul, to the glory of heaven" (p. 26,199). As a result all are now required to accept the bodily assumption of Mary as doctrine. Otherwise, they are under the anguish of mortal sin.

If Mary was assumed into heaven one would naturally expect the Scriptures to have at least one reference to this momentous occasion. In 2 Kings 2:11 Elijah's ascension to heaven in a fiery chariot is described for us. Even Enoch being taken by God is mentioned (Gen. 5:24). Of course, we are all well acquainted with the Assumption of Christ (Acts 1:9).

Catholics readily admit that the scriptures are silent. Keating, in his chapter of Marian Beliefs, says, "fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none...The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Assumption as something definitely true is a guarantee that it is true" (Catholicism and Fund., p. 275).

What could possibly be the motivation for a doctrine on the Bodily Assumption of Mary? Perhaps, it is the quest to place Mary on an equal plane as the Son of God who did bodily ascend into Heaven. Mary is worshiped by some on the level with God. To justify this, she must be shown in every way to be equal with God.

Mary as the Mediatrix in Prayer

Mariolatry, or the exaltation of Mary to a supernatural position, grew gradually over a long period of time. We have seen how the doctrine of original sin led to immaculate conception of Mary then to the perpetual virginity of Mary and to the final myth of the bodily assumption of Mary. These views have led to the point of glorifying Mary to the position of Godhood. The fundamental error of Catholicism is that it repeatedly places Mary where only God belongs, instead of placing her with mankind.

When, where, and who first began to pray to Mary cannot be determined. Pope Leo XIII wrote, "To thee we lift our prayers, for thou art the Mediatrix...of our salvation" (Rosary, p. 121). God cannot deny her requests, if one will call upon Mary he cannot be denied. "No, indeed, Jesus is too loving a Son to refuse the wishes of His Mother; Mary is too loving a Mother to fail to plead for my needs. Nothing, then,

have I to fear if only I learn to call upon Mary." (Moffatt, p. 74).

Our prayers are to be addressed to God, not Mary. *"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full"* (Jn. 16:23,24).

Most Catholics are taught to pray: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus, Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen." Thus, these prayers are said over and over again. Jesus condemned such vain repetitions in prayer. *"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him"* (Mt. 6:7,8).

Many people mistakenly believe the Catholic Church teaches Mary is on par with Jesus in the role of mediating between God and man. The Bible clearly teaches that there is but one mediator *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* (I Tim. 2:5).

Just why would we need more than one mediator. Catholics explain. Again, St. Bernard wrote *"...Christ is the only mediator of justice...but because men...fear the Divine Majesty...it was necessary to assign us another advocate to whom we might have recourse with less fear and more confidence, and this advocate is Mary"* (Glories, p. 169f). We have a loving and sympathetic mediator. *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15).

Mary as the Co-Redemptrix with Christ

According Catholic doctrine Mary has the power to dispense forgiveness as she wills. St. Bernard wrote, *"he was placed the whole price of redemption in the hands of Mary, that she may dispense it at will"* (Glories, p. 85). This role is said to be connected to her role as mediator. *"It was also proper for the Eternal Father to create her in grace because he destined her to be the repairer of the lost world and the mediator of peace between men and God."* (Alphonsus, pt. 2, p. 2).

Only God can dispense forgiveness of sins. *"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"* (Mk. 2:7).

Not only is Mary able to dispense redemption, without her one cannot obtain salvation. Pope Leo XII wrote, *"...none, O Mother of God, attains salvation except through thee; none receives a gift from the throne of mercy except through thee."* (Rosary, p. 131). A bird, we are told, *"cannot lift itself without the support of the air, so the soul, according to the divinely established order, cannot without Mary lift itself to God or do God's work."* She is *"the dispenser of our Lord's Blood"* (Legio Mariae, p. 129).

In contrast, the Bible declares that only through the name of Christ is there salvation. *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"* (Ac. 4:12).

Only Jesus could have been our sacrifice because the sacrifice had to be sinless (I Pet. 1:18; 19; 2:21-24; 3:18; Heb. 4:15). Mary is not sinless and therefore could not have been our redeemer.

Further speculation is made that God gave up His Son for us because of His love for Mary. *"he preserved man on account of His unique love for the Blessed Virgin."* (Alphonsus, Pt. 2, p. 52). Consider what John 3:16 says, *"God so loved the world..."* (Jn. 3:16).

The truth is, God or Christ never gave Mary a direct role in the Redemptive process. Salvation and redemption are in Jesus (Eph. 1:7; 2:13-18; Col. 1:13,14; Heb. 7:25; Tit. 2:11-14).

Mary, the Mother of God

Mary is considered to be the Mother of God the Son. *"But has Mary power to help? How can I doubt it? Is she not the Queen of heaven? Is she not the mother of the All-powerful God?"* (Moffatt, p. 73). *"As a divine Person, Jesus could in no way be begotten by man, His Virgin Mother Mary conceived Him through the divine power. Because He is divine, she is the Mother of God - not the Mother of God the Father, or of God the Holy Spirit, but the Mother of God's eternal Son who is also God, This title, 'Mother of God,' is Mary's chief glory, of which she may not be deprived by any true Christian"* (This Is the Catholic Church, Knights of Columbus, p. 5).

Her role as Mother is the Godhead does not stop with the Son, she is also considered the Mother of the Church. "The Virgin Mary is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and the redeemer. She is clearly the mother of the members of Christ, since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the church, who are members of it's head. Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church." Why? "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, is also our Mother, because: 1. we are the adopted brothers of Jesus Christ, and therefore children of Mary; 2. Jesus Christ gave her to us as our heavenly Mother...Jh. 19:26,27" (Catholic Faith, p. 190).

Mary did not bring the God part of Jesus into existence, anymore than a my mother and your mother is the mother of our soul when she gave birth to our physical bodies. As God, Jesus possessed Deity from Eternity long before he was born of a virgin in a stable at Bethlehem "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (Jn. 1:1,14). So Mary gave Jesus His human flesh, but his Deity He shared in common with His Heavenly Father, not with Mary. Christ created everything, with the Father, even Mary and her soul (Col. 1:15-17). As God, Christ has no beginning and no end. "*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.*" (Ps. 90:2). "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM*" (Jn. 8:58).

This belief contradicts the deity of Christ. Jesus shows again and again that he is the Son of God and the Son of Man. If Mary had been supernatural, then Christ would have been born of two divine beings and would not have been the Son of Man at all.

Veneration of Mary

Do Catholics worship Mary? They kneel before her statue and pray to her. People make altars to worship her. Special devotees called the Legion of Mary. Consider the following incriminating evidence in quotes like this: "O most pure Virgin Mary, I worship thy most holy heart..." (Glories, p. 104).

Veneration or worship of Mary does promote idolatry when Catholics bow or kneel before her image or picture. At the Council of Trent it was determined: "The images of Christ and the Virgin Mother of God, and the other saints are to be had and to be kept especially in the churches, and due honor and veneration are to be given them...by the images which we kiss, and before which we..prostrate ourselves we adore Christ, and we venerate the saints whose likeness they bear" (Question Box, p. 370,371).

When Cornelius fell down to worship Peter, Peter refused to accept such devotion (Acts 10;25,26). Twice John was so overcome with the visions of Revelation to sought to show veneration to an angel. Like Peter, the angel also rejected this worship (Rev. 22:8,9). When Satan tempted Jesus to bow down and worship him, Christ responded, "*Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord Your God, and Him only you shall serve'*" (Matt. 4:10). True Christians will worship only God. Only God may be worshiped and offered religious service. To exalt and glory religiously in humans is wrong. Since we are not baptized in the name of Mary and she was not crucified for us, we must not glory in her. We have Only one Master, Him only do we serve (Matt. 6:24).

Deification of Mary

Is Mary God? Is she deity? Many of Catholic authorities place Mary on a level with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Some have exalted her above angels. "She is exalted above the angels, for surely God's mother is nearer to Him than the angels" (Catholic Dict., p. 554). Pope Leo XIII wrote, she "has a favor and power with her Son greater than any human or angelic creature has ever obtained or ever can gain" (Rosary of Mary, pp. 1,2). As a human, Mary was below angels, never above them. Man was made lower than the angels (Ps. 8:5,6).

If it stopped here it would be just short of declaring her deity, however, it is further argued that the world was created by God for her, by her and can only be sustained through her. "For this reason St. Bernard was right in declaring that God created the whole world for the Blessed Virgin who was destined to be His Mother. And St. Bonaventure was right in saying that its existence depends on her will: 'The world, O most holy Virgin, which you with God formed from the beginning, continues to exist at your will'"

(Alphonsus Maria de Ligouri, Pt. 2, p. 52).

She is given other attributes of God. The Hail Mary promotes Mary's ability to hear every person in every place making her not only omnipresent but also omniscience. Since she is said to even answer every prayer Mary would be omnipotence. The Legion of Mary declares, "...by the ordinance of God, her power is without limit...in practice the Catholic Church looks upon the Mother of God as being as unbounded power in the realm of grace ...Mary is simply... the most universal supernatural power in Heaven and on earth, outside the Three Divine Persons." (Legio Mariae, p. 11,317). Catholic "Saint" Alphonsus Ligouri wrote, "At the command of Mary all obey, even God, She is omnipotent, for the queen, according to all laws, enjoys the same privileges as the king; and since the son's power also belongs to the mother, this Mother is made omnipotent by an omnipotent Son..the blessed virgin can do whatever she pleases both in heaven and on earth...'At the command of Mary, all obey, even god'...God grants the prayers of Mary as if they were commands.."Yes, Mary is omnipotent...for the queen by every law enjoys the same privileges as the king..the power of the Son and that of the mother is the same, a mother is made omnipotent by an omnipotent Son' ...Since the Mother, then, should have the same power as the Son, rightly has Jesus, who is omnipotent, made Mary also omnipotent...whatever the Mother asks for, the Son never denies her."(The Glories of Mary, p. 114, 154-156).

Mary was not All-knowing. She did not even grasp the wonder of what took place at Bethlehem (Lk. 2:19). She was bewildered by the action of the Lord Jesus as a boy in the temple (Lk. 2:48-50). With the brethren she even tried to interrupt the public ministry of the Lord (Mk. 3:31f).

Mary is given the role of Headship over the Church. She rules as Queen of the Church and Queen of the Apostles. St. Antonius said, "God has placed the whole Church not only under the patronage, but even under the dominion of Mary" (Glories, p. 155). Jesus is Head of the church as a man is head of his wife (Eph. 5:22f). Christ is the only head of the Church (Col. 1:18). It is not a body with two heads. Nor a bride with two heads. Christ has given all authority over the church (Eph. 1:21,22).

Summary

In scripture she is never exalted above the role of a fleshly mother. Nowhere in the Bible is it implied that Mary occupied any higher place than any other woman. Ironically, Jesus never even called Mary "mother" in scripture. Jesus Christ never held Mary in any regard above being the mother of His flesh, His earthly mother, not the mother of his deity or Godhood.

No where in the Word of God is Mary ever listened to a prayer by anyone. Never does she answer a prayer or plead with God or Christ with a prayer. She is no Co-redeemer, or Co-Savior. She was never worshiped, nor can she ever be worshiped. She was the mother of the flesh of Jesus, but God is his only source of His Deity. She is not above the angels, or a Co-creator. Mary is not Omnipotent. She is never refer to as a Queen. She is not the Queen of heaven of the church, she is not God.

Her body returned to the dust of the earth and there it is waiting for the general resurrection.

Christ is the preeminent one, and we are complete in Him (Col. 1:18,19). It is in these last days that God has spoken to us through Him, He is the one we ought to pay heed to (Heb. 1:1,2). He alone is the Captain of our salvation and the Author of our faith.

Questions:

1. What is mariology and mariolatry?
2. Why do some believe that it was necessary that Mary be immaculately conceived?
3. Where does the concept of "original sin" originate?

4. Where does the Catholic church turn to for authority and belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary?
5. List the names of Jesus brothers? Did He have sisters?
6. Use scriptures to show that sex in marriage is not tainted or sinful.
7. What is the Bodily Assumption of Mary?
8. List those mentioned in the Bible who were taken from earth without first experiencing death?
9. What is the origin of the bodily assumption of Mary?
10. To whom should we address our prayers? How does this exclude Mary?
11. How many mediator does the Bible recognize?
12. Why do some claim the need for Mary as a mediator between man and Christ?
13. Who alone has the right to dispense forgiveness of sins?
14. Why can't Mary have a direct role in the salvation of man?
15. Who is Mary said to be the Mother of according to Catholicism?
16. Explain the difference between Mary being the mother of Jesus and being called the "Mother of God".
17. Give evidence that Catholics do indeed venerate or worship Mary.

18. Why is the worship of Mary wrong?
19. Can Mary be above angels? Explain.
20. What divine attributes have been bestowed upon Mary?
21. Why can Mary not be the head of the church?

Application & Discussion:

1. What scriptural lessons can be learned and applied by Christians day from a study of the life of Mary?
2. How did Jesus view Mary according the the Gospels (Lk. 11:27,28; Mk. 3:31-35).

Homework: Take the lessons learned from the life of Mary according to the Bible and apply them to your life.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Life in Outer Space

Is there anyone looking back at us? Did life on earth originate from life on another planet? Is there intelligent life on planets in outer space?

Aliens from outer space are popular. Alien life is the subject of hit television shows and movies. The wave of UFO sightings and the craze over flying saucers is the motivation behind myriads of documentaries. Roswell, New Mexico's greatest claim to fame as a tourist attraction comes from the alien ship and autopsies supposedly performed on the nearby U.S. Air Force Base. Then there are those people claiming they were abducted by aliens.

Why the Need to Find Life in Outer Space?

★ **Evolution Lacks Terrestrial Proof**

Extraterrestrial life is almost inevitable in an evolutionary worldview. In the January 17, 1980 issue of *New Scientist* magazine, Dr. Sagan wrote: "there are something like 1022 stars in the universe, and as about one in a million of these stars is a yellow dwarf star like our Sun, this means there are about 1016 sun-type stars in the universe. Now one in a million of these Sun-type stars probably has a planetary system similar to that of our Sun's. Therefore, there are about 1010 planetary systems in the Universe. One in a million of these planetary systems must have a planet similar to that of Earth, and life must have evolved on those planets in the same manner in which it has evolved here on Earth. Therefore, there are at least 10,000 planets in the Universe that have life on them"(1980, p. 151). If life evolved from a single cell spontaneously born in a primordial sea on earth, perhaps it could have done so on one of the many planets in the universe, according to some evolutionary scientists.



Some evolutionists had stopped looking for the missing link here on earth and have traded in their little picks and shovels for telescopes and space probing satellites. The thought is: if life did exist in outer space, could it have been transferred to earth. This is viewed as a vindication of evolution that will somehow nullify creation. All this argument does is simply push the problem of biogenesis off to another place in the universe. It still does not answer the question of where life in this universe originated.

★ **Complexity of Life Demands a Designer**

Life on earth is very complex. Bacteria are considered to be the simplest live form. However, in this case "simple" is the relative term. Consider the bacterium *Candidatus Carsonella rudii* which has 159,662 base pairs of DNA, which encode approximately 182 genes. Furthermore there is *nanoarchaeum equitans* which has 490,885 base pairs, which encodes approximately 552 genes. "The complexity of its information processing systems and the simplicity of its metabolic apparatus suggests an unanticipated world of organisms to be discovered" (Elizabeth Waters et al., "the Genome of Nanoarchaeum equitans: Insights Into Early Archaeal Evolution and Derived Parasitism," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA 100 no. 22 (2003): 12984-12988).

Life at the very simplest forms is very complex and demonstrates significant design. This has led Sir Fred Hoyle, who authored *Life from Space*, to write: "the likelihood of the formation of life from inanimate matter is one to a number with 40,000 noughts after it.... It is big enough to bury Darwin and the whole theory of evolution. There was no primeval soup, neither on this planet nor on any other, and if the

beginnings of life were not random, they must therefore have been the product of purposeful intelligence (1981, 294:148). Hoyle, Fred (1981), "Hoyle on Evolution," *Nature*, 294:148, November 12). The complexity of life not only debunks evolution but demands a Designer.

★ **The Demand for More Time for Evolution**

According to evolutionists the earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old. Other parts of outer space, they believe, are much older. Perhaps the oldest is upwards to 15 billion years old. Since the mathematical probability of enough time on earth for life to evolve is too great, evolutionists are looking to the most ancient corners of the universe to find evidence that life had a head start before landing on earth. If life exists the universe beyond the earth, perhaps they can explain how complex life forms evolved on earth in so short a time. It is hoped that proof of previously living organisms in outer space "may have seeded the early Earth with the building blocks of life" (Jeffs, William (2006), "NASA Scientists Find Primordial Organic Matter in Meteorite," NASA: Johnson Space Center, Release J06-103, <http://www.nasa.gov/centers/johnson/news/releases/2006/J06-103.html>).

★ **Faith in Directed Panspermia**

Could life have been brought to earth by intelligent extraterrestrial aliens? Did intelligent extraterrestrial aliens send life to earth? Those who say "yes" believe in "panspermia." "Panspermia is a Greek word that translates literally as 'seeds everywhere'. The panspermia hypothesis states that the 'seeds' of life exist all over the Universe and can be propagated through space from one location to another. Some believe that life on Earth may have originated through these 'seeds'" (www.panspermia-theory.com). Crick and Orgel believe this is the answer. Then they postulate that this alien society then seeded or "infected" other parts of outer space, including earth, with primitive forms of life (like bacteria). What is their proof? They look at the similarity of the genetic code in all living things and then surmise: "the universality of the genetic code follows naturally from an 'infective' theory of the origins of life. Life on earth would represent a clone derived from a single extraterrestrial organism" (F.H.C. Crick and L.E. Orgel, "Directed Panspermia," *Icarus* 19 (1973); 341-346). However, from a creationist's point of view the similarity of the genetic code in all living things could just as likely point to a common Designer who created all living things by His Word. Could God have created life on planets other than earth? Did this life coming from outer space evolve or could it have been created? Why would God created it elsewhere, when He said he made man on earth? God did spend the vast majority of the creation week preparing the earth for the crowning glory of His creation - man. Furthermore, who prepared the spaceship and the mechanisms needed to protect the bacteria for the long and life-threatening trip to earth?

★ **Answers to Life's Questions**

All men of all ages, races, and cultures have been perplexed in finding the answers to life's basic questions:

- ▶ Where did I come from?
- ▶ Why am I here?
- ▶ What is the meaning of life?
- ▶ Where am I going?
- ▶ How do I get there?

A highly developed alien race might have advanced knowledge to pass on to us. They may provide us with the answers to these fundamental questions. They may have such advanced medical and technical knowledge to change the direction of the human race. These are the hopes of secular man.

However, if God is the Creator of the universe and man is made in His image (Gen. 1:26,27) then God is the only one who can answer the fundamental questions of life.

★ **A Substitute Religion**

Studies have demonstrated that unchurched souls who maintain they are religious, are especially vulnerable to belief in alien life forms on other planets. Gerald Eberlein said: "research has shown that people who are not affiliated with any church, but who claim that they are religious, are particularly susceptible to the possible existence of extraterrestrials. For them, UFOlogy is a substitute religion" (Hallo

Erdling, *Ufologie*, Focus 45:254, 6 November 1995). For those who do not wish to have their life choices interfered with by an all-mighty God this secular replacement for a “creator” is very appealing. New Age religions often propagate this idea of intelligent life providing the answers to life on earth.

Does Science Have Any Evidence of Life in Outer Space?

Do modern observations support the secular notion that the universe is teeming with life? “In 1900, the French Academy of Science offered a prize of 100,000 francs for the first person to make contact with an alien civilization—so long as the alien was not from Mars, because the academy was convinced that Martian civilization was an established fact!” (Ham, Ken and Don Batten (2002), “Is There Intelligent Life in Outer Space?” *Answers in Genesis*, [On-line], URL: <http://www.answersingenesis.org>). This belief is still held by some. In 1996, NASA researchers claimed a meteorite, allegedly from Mars, found in Antarctica. This contained a fossil believed to have come from Mars. According to some, life may have migrated to earth in this manner. However, “given their size and transfer times (estimated from exposure to radiation in space), all will have received a sterilizing radiation dose during their transit to earth” (M.J Burchell, “Panspermia Today,” *International Journal of Astrobiology* 3 no. 2 (2004) 73-80). NASA’s Phoenix lander is believed to have identified water in a sample of Martian soil. Water alone is not proof of life, although life as we know it requires water. Dr. Andrew Knoll biologist at Harvard university, said concerning Mars’s soil, “it was really salty - in fact, it was salty enough that only a handful of known terrestrial organisms would have a ghost of a chance of surviving there when conditions were at their best.” (BBC News, “Early Mars ‘Too Salty’ for Life”).

Another possible source for life is from the other planets in our solar system or from one of the many moons of Jupiter and Saturn. Just locating water, organic molecules, and energy is no real proof of life. For life to exist there must be information (DNA) for replication and function of an organism. Information requires an intelligent source of its design. Additionally, life in the solar system requires a planet or moon to be the right distance from the sun for liquid water to exist. Venus is far too hot and Pluto is much too cold.

Another suspected source for life on earth are one of the many comets or meteors. It is believed that if these passed close enough to or collided with earth there could have been a transfer of life. This assumes they would have the components needed for life. Yet, life only comes from life, and life only from the Life-Giver.

Because of the limited possibility life could have arrived on earth on its own via a comet or meteor from a distant planet, some look to UFOs and alien abductions for the origins of life on earth. However, alien abductions would have to presuppose life on earth already existed. Unidentified flying objects (UFOs) are just that - an unknown factor. Many of these so-called UFOs are not aliens from outer space but weather balloons, aircraft, even fireflies, etc. Most of these have turned out to be naturally occurring phenomenon and not one of them have been proven to be spacecraft from an extraterrestrial intelligent life form.

SETI is the acronym that stands for the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. It consists of a billion dollar array of powerful radio telescopes. The U.S. has spent millions of taxpayer dollars to contract and use these to search for signals from other planets which would indicate intelligent life. Federal funding ceased in 1981. No signs of life in the great beyond have been found.

If the Government already has a spaceship and dead autopsied aliens on an Air Force base near Roswell, New Mexico, there would have been no need for them to fund the SETI program. The photos and films of the Roswell aliens is nothing but a gross sham.

The bottom line is - there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever for life on other planets. Dennis Overbye, in a special edition of *Time* magazine, asked: “and what if, after a millennium of listening and looking, there is only silence—what if we still seem alone? If interstellar migration is as easy and inevitable as Finney and Jones have outlined, and if the galaxy, 10 billion years old, is populated by other advanced races, critics of SETI argue, ETs should have come calling by now. There is no scientific evidence that they have, and the lack of it has led some scientists to argue that there is no life out there at all” (Overbye, Dennis (1992), “Is Anybody Out There?,” *Time* [special issue], Fall). “Dr. Isaac Asimov, in reviewing

several books for *Science Digest*, offering his comments on one by I.S. Shklovskii and Carl Sagan (*Intelligent Life in the Universe*). In his review, Dr. Asimov said: 'There are so many books on extraterrestrial life (I have written one myself) that they would almost seem to be a cottage industry. This is in a way surprising, since we have absolutely no evidence that any such phenomenon as life on other worlds exists'" (Asimov, Isaac (1982), "Book Reviews," *Science Digest*, 90[3]:36, March). Exobiology or Astrobiology (study of extraterrestrial life) cannot provide any answers to the origin of life on earth because life cannot be found by scientist anywhere beyond the earth.

Yet, the evidence for the source of life on earth is extraterrestrial. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Gen. 1:1). *"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them"* (Gen. 1:26,27). *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made"* (John 1:1-3).

Mark Twain comments well describe the "science" utilized by many evolutionary scientists: "there is something fascinating about science. One gets such a wholesale return of conjecture for such a trifling investment of facts" (Twain, Mark (1883), *Life on the Mississippi* (Boston, MA: J.R. Osgood) 1883, p. 156).

What Proof Is in the Bible for Extraterrestrial Life?

One of the most turned to proof-texts for extraterrestrial life is the mention of giants or Nephilim. *"There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown"* (Gen. 6:4). Some claim these "sons of God" who married the "daughters of men" were fallen angels, and that the nephilim were products of those "marriages." "Sons of God" is clearly used of angels in Job 38:7. The Septuagint (LXX) here translates "sons of God" as "angels of God." This need not mean that evil angels or demons actually cohabited with women. Jesus made it clear that angels do not marry. When asked about men and women being married in Heaven, Jesus responded, *"for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven"* (Matthew 22:30). Concerning the use of "sons of God" the children of Israel were called *"the sons of the living God"* in Hosea 1:10. The Genesis account says nothing about the origin of these nephilim other than the general context which would indicate that the "sons of God" were the descendants of Seth who had married the "daughters of men" or the daughters of worldly/evil men indiscriminately. The word "nephilim" is only used in Genesis 6:4 and Numbers 13:33 where it is translated "giants". *"There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."*

It has been argued that certain verses in the Bible imply extraterrestrial life. They believe that since heaven can mean outer space a passage in Mark clearly claims life beyond the earth. *"And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven"* (Mark 13:27). However, the verse is describing all of the creation where the "elect" might be found. The angels will gather all the elect of God even those in planes in the sky or on a space station or a moon base.

Others appeal to John 10:16 which says, *"and other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."* These "other sheep" are not extraterrestrials, but they are the Gentiles.

The "many witnesses" of Ephesians 6:12 are assumed to be life in outer space. However, the context is dealing with spiritual foes.

In the highly figurative language of the apocalyptic writings of Daniel is found a battle between the angels Gabriel and Michael with the kings of Persia. This is said to be a conflict with aliens. The angel Gabriel told Daniel, *"Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But*

the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia” (Daniel 10:12-13).

Moses told the Israelites, *“if any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you” (Deut. 30:4).* This only could prove that the Israelites would spread out into outer space. Yet, the metaphor is used for any part of the earth *“under heaven”* or the sky.

The next proof-text does clearly say that God made the hosts of heaven in contrasts to God’s creation on earth. *“You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You” (Neh. 9:6).* Nehemiah is not praying about alien races in far away galaxies but angels or perhaps the stars and other planets.

Other passages used to prove the Bible speaks of intelligent life beyond this planet which God created are Isaiah 24:21; 45:18; etc. Like the others, these do not provide any evidence of such a creation of life in outer space other than the angels or even the heavenly bodies which are often personified in the scriptures.

What Is the Biblical Proof for Life Only On Earth?

Christians should constantly examine ideas in light of Scripture. The Bible never mentions visits from extraterrestrial life from outer space or God having created alien races on distant planets as He did the human race on earth. The Word of God does not expressly verify or repudiate the existence of intelligent life on other planets. It is not wise to add to the Words of God (Rev. 22:18,19). If God is silent on the matter it is best to leave extraterrestrials in the category of those secret things which belong to God. *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).*

The very nature of the Creator comes in to play when addressing life in other parts of the universe. First, if there is life God must have created it. He is the source of all life. Next, God is immutable, that is, He does not change. Furthermore, *“God is love” (1 John 4:8).* He likewise is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). God in His love made man in His image and gave him the right to chose to obey and love Him. God would have granted the freedom of choice to all such intelligent life forms. Creatures possessing free moral agency, however, are not perfect; they make mistakes. All would sin (Rom. 3:23). God is not only loving, but just. He would have loved them enough to provide a way to overcome sin.

All sinners need redemption. Sin is a barrier that prevents man from being right with God and having a relationship with a holy God (Is. 59:2). God requires the life giving blood through death to atone for sins. Extraterrestrial sinners would not be blood relatives of Jesus, and so Christ’s shed blood cannot pay for their sin. One might at first suppose that Christ also visited their world, lived there, and died there as well, but this is antibiblical. Christ died once for all (1Pet. 3:18; Heb. 9:27,28; 10:10).

As a substitute could not be found for us (Heb. 10:4,11), apart from God’s sending His Son, it would not be possible for one to be found for Ets apart from God loving them enough to send His son (John 3:16). Animals are not related to us; their shed blood cannot count for ours. Christ is a blood relative of ours since He is descended from Adam as were all human beings are of *“one blood” (Acts 17:26).* If Jesus were to atone for Klingons, He would need to become a Klingon. The activities of Christ toward the earth and mankind proves that the earth and mankind are unique in the physical universe.

Jesus is our only way to God. *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).* Martians would have to have the Son of God as their only way back to God.

Intelligent alien beings cannot be redeemed. Because Christ died *“once for all.”* Christ is a High Priest *“who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (Heb. 7:27).* *“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Heb. 9:28).*

God only has one house or family. Christ has only one church. He is it’s single Head. The church

is the bride of Christ. Christ will not have multiple “brides.” There is no other “called-out” saved with Christ as the Savior.

The tree of life is proof that we are the only intelligent beings in the physical universe (Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24; Rev. 22:1,2,14).

The second death (hell) is proof that extraterrestrial life does not exist (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 25:41).

God Only created intelligent life - man and angels. Angels are not physical beings but spiritual. Thus many of the arguments against the creation of extraterrestrials will not apply to their existence. God's only true extraterrestrial creations are the angels. The earth is the only place where intelligent life is said to exist or dwell (Is. 45:18; Ps. 155:16; Acts 17:24-26). Earth came into existence on the first day of Creation (Genesis 1:1). God withheld the creation of the Sun, Moon and stars until the fourth day (Genesis 1:14-19). The Earth may not be the center of the solar system or the universe, yet it is the centerpiece of God's creation.

Sin has had a negative effect on all of God's creation. Since sin entered the creation everything in the universe will eventually wear out-like a garment. When Adam sinned death came to all of creation - men, animals, even stars and planets. Romans 8:18-22 teaches that all “*creation was subjected to futility.*”

God is not only going to destroy the earth with all wicked men who do not repent but all of creation. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”* (2 Peter 3:9,10). Would this same God who loves sinful man and wants to give him every chance to repent destroy other intelligent sinful life without giving them the same chance. The end of the universe is contingent upon man's opportunity to repent. God's timetable is linked to man not Ets.

What is the Purpose of the Heavens?

In the movie, *Contact*, the main character, Ellie, as a child asked her father if life exists out in the Universe. He answered: “Well, if there wasn't, it'd be an awful waste of space.” Is the creation of the Heavens a waste of space and God's creative power? Most of the Universe is composed of vast distances of nothing but empty space. What purpose would a lifeless outer space serve the Creator and His creation?

In the very first chapter of the Bible, God created the Sun, Moon and stars to give light. *“Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth’; and it was so”* (Gen. 1:14,15). These heavenly bodies illuminate the universe as “light-bearers.” They help man distinguish the passage of time and predict the coming seasons. Navigation by land, sea, and air would have been much more difficult for man without them. Several passages in the Bible indicate that the heavens were made for mankind and are subject to the needs of God's ultimate creation. *“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet”* (Ps. 8:3-6). *“And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage”* (Deut. 4:19). Apparently, God made the stars for mankind on earth, not for other intelligent life on distance planets.

When men today search the stars of the Heavens, they draw their attention to the hope in extraterrestrial life. According to vast verses in the Bible the heavens were created to draw man's attention to the great Glory of God the Father of all and Creator of all. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge” (Ps. 19:1,2). *“Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a*

curtain" (Ps. 104:2). God asked Job, *"Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, Or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?"* (Job 38:31-33).

God is said to be able to name all the stars of heaven and be able to count them. Man with all his scientific equipment has no real final idea of the number of stars in the universe. *"He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite"* (Ps. 147:4,5). God can count them without missing one. *"Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing"* (Is. 40:26).

Earth was created for God's intelligent creation, man. *"The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; But the earth He has given to the children of men"* (Ps. 115:16). The heavens were created to point to the Creator's existence (Rom. 1:20), His glory, His eternal nature, His power, etc. Man should look to the vast creation of the universe to mediate on the greatness of our God, not made-up alien beings in which to place our hope and salvation.

In the television series, *The X-Files*, it claimed: "The truth is out there." The Truth is not out in space or in ourselves. The Truth is in God and His Son, Jesus Christ. This Truth is the Word of God (Jn. 17:17). Futile speculations in the stars of Heaven do not aid man in developing strong faith in the God of Heaven. These extraterrestrials are nothing but idols of modern man who are created in his sinful nature and attempt to change the truth of God for the lie of evolution and faith in the Savior for alien salvation (Rom. 1:25).

Although our all-powerful God could have created extraterrestrial life, it seems rather obvious from Scripture that He did not. Is man alone in the universe? NO! God is not far from each one of us (Acts 17). Man needs to look for a relationship with the Creator and not look for companionship with the creation.

Questions:

1. What role does the belief in evolution play in the search for extraterrestrial life?
2. What is panspermia?
3. Where should we go to find the answers to life's basic questions?
4. Why can life not be found to exist on other planets in our solar system?
5. How much evidence for life beyond this Earth has been discovered?
6. Is the source of life on earth extraterrestrial? Explain.
7. What passages are used to prove the Bible teaches there is life in outer space?

8. To what does "*other sheep*" refer in John 10:16?
9. How should a Bible student respond to the fact the Bible never mentions biological life in outer space?
10. If life exist in outer space how or by whom was it created?
11. What was necessary for Christ to become and do in order to save human life from sin?
12. How many times did Christ die for sinner?
13. What other life did God create?
14. What is going to happen when Christ returns?
15. Why did God create the universe?

Application & Discussion:

1. Why could sinful aliens in outer space not be able to receive forgiveness of sin?
2. Do you believe in extraterrestrial life? Explain.

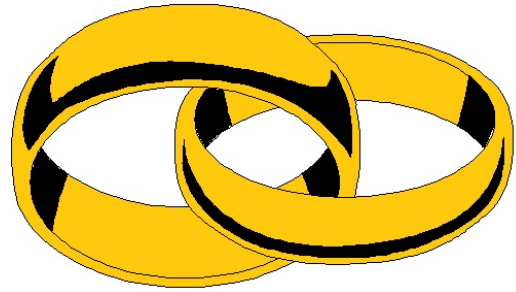
Homework: Instead of looking for aliens in outer space, look for those on earth who are alienated by sin from God and share the Truth of the Gospel with them.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Divorce for Any Reason

Divorce is now commonly accepted in modern society. Almost every state has legislated laws permitting “no fault” divorce. Fifty years ago divorce was rare. Nearly everyone, today, has experienced the pain of seeing a loving, monogamous relationship ripped apart by divorce.

How did divorce become so common? Several factors have played a role in the casual dissolution of holy matrimony. First, families are not as influential on or supportive of marriage. At one time a family would disown or ostracize a relative who divorced for just any reason. If a marriage was in trouble, the family would join together and use its combined years of experience, wisdom, and support to encourage the couple. Today, parents, in-laws, siblings, etc. seem all too eager to see a marriage break-up instead of make-up. Second, society in general no longer uses its collective power to pressure couples to make a marriage work. Third, laws and courts that once protected marriages and discouraged divorce, except for adultery, etc., now have made obtaining a divorce cheaper and easier than getting married. Finally, religion has acceded to mob rule and will no longer support Biblical teachings regarding divorce. Churches are now just bandaging up the victims of divorce with support groups instead of allowing the authority of Christ to address the matter of divorce.



When divorce becomes common place and acceptable in the world and among the denominations, you can count on the fact that New Testament Christians are going to be strongly influenced. Some will just approve of divorce because it is culturally acceptable and legal. Others will twist the teachings of the New Testament to permit the scandalous disgrace of divorce.

What would Jesus say if He was permitted to answer the question: “Can one divorce for just any reason?” In fact, Jesus was asked this very question by the Pharisees. He gave a very detailed and concise answer in Matthew 19:1-9.

Jesus was passing through the territory of Perea (which means “beyond”, i.e. it was the land beyond the Jordan River). While healing the people, He was approached by the Pharisees. They asked Him, *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”* (19:3). The question was not asked by enquiring minds but for the purpose of testing Him or discrediting Jesus publicly before the people. Perea was the territory ruled by Herod Antipas. The same Herod whom John the Immerser condemned for having an unlawful marriage to his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias. As a result of his teaching, John was imprisoned and later beheaded (Matt. 14:3-12). Perhaps, the Pharisees were hoping that Jesus would speak out and meet the same fate as His cousin. At least Jesus would go against the popular beliefs and practices of Jewish society by taking the unpopular and unscriptural view of rabbi Shammai who declared that divorce was never permitted. The Pharisees accepted the teachings of rabbi Hillel who permitted the Jews to divorce for such minor marital grievances as burning the bread or putting too much salt in the food.

Jesus started to answer by pointing out that the Scriptures were clear on this matter: *“Have you not read...”* This would have been an insult to the Pharisees, since they considered themselves experts in the Law of Moses. He was indicating that the Pharisees should have discovered that answer for themselves by reading the Bible.

Instead of referring to a learned rabbi or a command from the Law of Moses, Jesus points to God who designed marriage from the very beginning to be a monogamous and permanent relationship. *“He*

who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female' (19:4). God in His wisdom and perfect creation only made one man and one woman. This not only rules out polygamy, polyandry, homosexuality, etc. but it also rules out divorce. God gave Eve to Adam to be his wife. If that did not work out there was no other woman to choose. God did not make another woman or two on the side just in case Eve put too much starch on his fig leaf. So, Jesus is saying, "No, a man cannot divorce his wife for just any reason because God only made one man and one woman in His perfect creation."

Next, to further answer the question, Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 in verse Matthew 19:5: *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife."* Keep in mind that this was not said for the sake of Adam and Eve so much as for their posterity. After all, they did not have a mother and father, but they were joined by God together in marriage. The term for *"joined"* here carries the idea of being "glued together" or "cemented together as one." Once cemented, they are never meant to come apart. Again, Jesus answers the question posed by the Pharisees: "No! God joined them to one another, so they were never to come apart."

Jesus takes up another argument to support His teaching as verse five continues: *"and the two shall become one flesh?" So then, they are no longer two but one flesh.*" The man and the woman are no longer two distinct individuals who can leave and do as they please with whomever they please. Instead, the two are one. "One flesh" may denote the sex act in which a couple will produce a child which is literally the product of two becoming one. Again, Jesus answers, "No! Because two have been made into one and one is not to be divided into two."

In verse six, Jesus concludes His answer for the moment by saying, *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."* A husband and wife are like inseparable siamese twins – to separated them would bring destruction. In the marriage two become one. When one of the marriage partners puts the other away unscripturally then one becomes two, and God's arrangement has been disregarded. God made the marriage, man has no right to destroy what God has created. The answer to the Pharisees' questions is still, "No! Because man does not have the right to separate what God has created."

The Pharisees are not satisfied with Jesus' answer which is based on the creation account in Genesis. They have a ready rebuttal from Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which is alluded to in their argument in verse seven. *"They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?'"* Jesus immediately counters their argument in verse eight, *"Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."* A quick reading of the text in Deuteronomy will show two distinct facts: 1) This was not a command from Moses but a concession and 2) divorce was not allowed for any reason but for a case of "uncleanness" or "nakedness." Whatever this involved it was not adultery. After all, adulterers were executed (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24). It must have been something just short of adultery, such as allowing another man to see her nakedness or to touch her inappropriately. However, it does not support the idea of Rabbi Hillel and the Pharisees of divorcing a wife for just any reason (like burning the toast). The Pharisees were pitting Moses against Jesus. Jesus is essentially refuting this by implying, "No! Moses did not say, 'Yes, you can divorce for just any reason.' If you want to quote Moses, God's Lawgiver, you must go back to the creation account in Genesis for the answer to your question."

Having quoted Genesis to support His teaching on divorce, Jesus now speaks from His own authority in verse nine: *"And I say to you..."* He now reminds them of His previous teaching on divorce (see Mt. 5:32) as verse nine continues, *"whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."* Jesus gives the one and only exception for divorce and that is sexual immorality or adultery. A paraphrase of Jesus' answer would read: "No! I say you cannot divorce for just any reason. The only reason for divorce is sexual immorality."

There is one more reason why Jesus forbids divorce for just any reason. If a man divorces his wife for just any reason he causes her to commit adultery when she remarries. Divorce for any reason is not guilt-free option. A mate cannot divorce his or her spouse for just any cause and walk away innocent of any sin. Jesus' qualification *"except for sexual immorality"* only permits the innocent party who remarries to do so without becoming an adulterer or adulteress. So Jesus is giving a final "No! Because divorce for

just any old reason causes others to enter adulterous relationships when they remarry and you will be held accountable for your role in these sins."

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" What did Jesus say? He said, "No...No...No...No...No...NO...NO!!!" For those who still argue that one can divorce for just any reason Jesus would ask, "What part of 'NO!' don't you understand? I told you 'no' seven times! How is it that you can turn around and say 'yes'?"

Still some will argue that you can divorce for any reason so long as you do not remarry. Jesus never said that. The subject of remarriage did not come up until verse nine and was not part of the original question. This argument would have to be proved using other passages because Jesus only gave one exception for divorce. Furthermore, this argument is still saying "yes" after Jesus has already said "no" seven times.

Is it a Sin for One to Divorce For Just Any Reason?

Several years ago, a visitor to the congregation where I was preaching requested a Bible study on the subject of divorce. She wanted to know if it was a sin to divorce for just any reason and could such a divorced person remarry. After having her read such passages as Matt. 5:32; 19:1-9; and 1 Cor. 7:10,11, we discussed the issue at length over the phone. She came to the conclusion that Jesus and Paul both taught against divorce for any reason and that she did not have a right to remarry. Then several days later she attended worship services and said that she was off to Michigan to get married. I reminded her about the conclusions she had arrived at after our study on the phone. She said, "Well, I called up three other preachers and they disagreed with you." My contention was that these three preachers were not in disagreement with me as much as they were with the Lord.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus if a man can divorce for just any reason He demonstrated from the creation of Adam and Eve that God never intended for a marriage to end in divorce. However, He did give one exception for divorce and that is on the grounds of sexual immorality (Matthew 19:1-9). In Corinthians 7:10,11, Paul does not allow for divorce, and he supports the Lord's teaching by commanding the Christians at Corinth not to divorce. However, some had already sinned by being divorced, so he instructs them to remain unmarried or be reconciled. Therefore, both Paul and Christ have commanded married couples not to divorce except for fornication. To disobey a command of the Lord is to sin.

However, Christ's law limiting the reason for divorce to just sexual immorality seems too severe and demanding. This is exactly how His disciples reacted when they heard the teaching of Jesus on divorce. *"His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry'"* (Matt. 19:10). Jesus did not change His teaching on the subject to suit the Jewish culture. Nor should it be said that Jesus overlooked some rather obvious reasons for permitting a divorce. After all, He is God and therefore all-knowing. In His wisdom, divorce was only made possible in situations where a spouse was guilty of fornication.

It can be expected that as soon as it is pointed out that Jesus only gave one exception for divorce, some will immediately begin to refute the words of our Lord with their own exceptions. "What about a wife whose husband beats her?" "What about the husband who is married to a wife who does not care for the children because she is always drunk?" "What about the poor wife married to a drug addict?" To these additional reasons for divorce could be added many others. First, what about going to the law so that the abusers can face the courts? But if the laws of men are not strong enough to protect the innocent, change them. Do NOT change the Law of God to make up for the deficiencies of man's laws. Furthermore, he or she could take the issue up with the spiritual leaders of the church. Our sympathy cannot be used to overthrow the commandments of God. Once you permit one person to come up with an exception to add to the commandment of our Lord, you give every other individual the same right to do so. This is the very attitude which has led and is leading to the acceptance of "no fault" divorce among so many Christians.

The consequences of saying "no" to divorce except for fornication is to teach and command all scripturally married couples to stay married no matter what problems arise. This is good for the sake of their souls and for the well-being of their children.

What about the consequences of saying "yes" to divorce for any reason? Or the consequences

of allowing for divorce for any reason so long as the husband and wife do not remarry? To do so would be to commit sin against God for several reasons. First, the couple breaks the marriage vows or promises they made before God. Next, they are doing something that God hates, while at the same time, claiming to love God (Mal. 2:13-16). Third, divorce destroys the marriage bond between a man and a woman which God has joined together. This is the very thing that Jesus warned against: "What God has joined in a holy marriage bond no man has the authority or right to divorce." When a divorce without scriptural cause takes place several have sinned against God: the spouse or spouses who divorce; the lawyer; the judge who grants it; the false teacher who argues for it; friends and relatives who support and encourage the divorce. Fourth, divorce makes it impossible for a husband and a wife to fulfill certain God-given duties, such as, sexual obligations, commands to the head of the family, the command to submit to the head, and parental responsibilities. Fifth, it may lead to one or both spouses being tempted to commit fornication or remarrying and thus committing adultery (Matt. 19:9). In addition, those who enter into a marriage with a divorced spouse is also guilty of adultery (Matt. 5:32). Furthermore, divorcing without a scriptural cause is a violation of the silence of the scriptures. The Bible is silent concerning other causes for divorce (1 Pet. 4:11). Finally, it adds to the Word of God. When the Lord gives only one exception for divorce and man adds one or two other exceptions of his own choosing then, the sin of adding to the Word of God has been committed (Rev. 22:18,19).

In short, to divorce before your spouse is guilty of fornication is a sin. It is a sin whether or not one or both remarry or remain unmarried or reconcile. All who sin will be held accountable. Therefore, those who have divorced for any reason other than sexual immortality must repent.

Questions:

1. Divorce was rare in American society in the past. Why is it so common today?
2. Who asked Jesus the question: "Can one divorce for just any reason?" What motivated them to ask this?
3. During Jesus day what were the two common views of divorce?
4. How does the fact that God created humanity as male and female rule our divorce? What else does it rule out?
5. What does the fact that God "joined" Adam and Eve together in marriage say about divorce?
6. How does the joining of two as one in marriage oppose the idea of divorce?
7. Did Moses allow the Jews to divorce for just any reason? Explain.

8. What is the one reason Jesus gave for divorce?
9. What is the final reason Jesus gave for couples not divorcing for just any reason?
10. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 would if someone has already divorce for the wrong reason?
11. How did Jesus' disciples react to His strict teaching on divorce?
12. What of the husband who beats his wife or the wife who is a drug addict who abuses the children? Can we add another reason for divorce? Explain.
13. Why does God hate divorce?
14. How many people are guilty of adultery when a man and a woman divorce without adultery and both marry someone else?

Application & Discussion:

1. How many times does Jesus in effect say “no” to the Pharisees’ question?
2. Can a couple not divorce but indefinitely separate? Is it a sin or acceptable to God? Explain.

Homework: Find a struggling married couple and encourage them to be faithful to their marriage covenant with they made before God.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Abortion

Back in the days of Juilius Caesar, there was a Roman poet and playwright named Horace. Horace criticized the laziness of many playwrights of his day. He strongly criticized those writers who, every time a problem occurred in the plot of their play, brought in one of he many Roman gods to solve it. Horace instructed, "Do not bring a god on the stage unless the problem is one that deserves a god to solve it."

One of the biggest issues of the day is over abortion. It is so controversial it requires go the Creator to step to the center of the stage to solve this moral tragedy. One January 22, 1973, called Black Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court in the Roe v. Wade case legalized abortion nationwide for the first time by a seven to two vote. Abortion was made legal.

If an unborn baby is not human life than abortion is a matter of personal liberty and solely a political issue. If abortion is the taking of a human life than it is murder, thus a moral issue. Abortion is not more a question of medical science than the electric chair a criminal is a question of the electrical engineer.

Although the Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not perform an abortion" it does deal with the morality of taking the life of those who are innocent. Abortion is a method of murder and the Bible does not list every method of murder, such as, abortion.

Supreme Court Justice Harry A Backnum wrote Roe V. Wade he appealed to religion. "If I were to appeal to religion, I would appeal to the religions of Rome and Greece." An early Christian lawyer by the name of Mark Felix (170-215 A.D.) can attest to the fact that the Roman world used abortion. He wrote, "There are some women among you who by drinking special potions extinguish the life o f the future human in their very bowels, thus committing murder before they even give birth" (Octavius chap. 30).

Even the early Christians had to deal with the problem of abortion. In "the teaching of the Twelve Apostles", a work of the first half of the second century, lists abortions with witchcraft, poisoning, and infanticide. Tertullian, who lived in the third century wrote: "To prevent a birth is only acceleration of murder., and it changes nothing whether you snatch away the already bon life or destroy one in the process of being born" (Apology 9). Again he explained to the Romans, "in our case, since murder is absolutely forbidden in any form, we may not destroy even the fetus in the womb...To hinder a birth is merely a speedier form of killing. It matters not whether you take away the life that is born, or destroy one that has not yet come to birth" (Tertullian Apology chap. 9).

Pro-abortion advocates do not agree with Tertullian's arguments. They say that a fetus is not human life until it can live independently. The Bible makes no such contrast. The Scriptures to not make a distinction between the life of a pre-natal or a port-natal baby.

How does the Bible identify a human being or person? God's word identifies a human being by calling it simply a "man", "Woman", "child", "son", "daughter", "baby", etc. if we find the bible used these terms for an unborn baby, that will constitute evidence which identifies one who is human as fully and complete as anyone in the Bible is identified.

Why is human life so important to God? Man is in the image of God (Gen. 1:26,27). This could only refer to the spiritual nature of God, hence man has an immortal spirit. Never before has such a statement appeared in Scripture, nor will it ever appear related to animal, plant or any other life. This is limited to human life. Only human life - by God's design - possesses the image of God. Only human life



can walk with and talk with and fellowship with the Creator. Animals cannot. Plants cannot. The fish cannot. Some people claim the immortal spirit of man is not present until a breath is drawn after birth. They cite Genesis 2:7. However, this is an implication of the atypical event of the miraculous creation of a full-grown adult.

God also created living things to reproduce after their own kind. This is true of plants (Gen. 1:11), animals (Gen. 1:21,24,25), and man (Gen. 1:26-28; 5:3). Man and woman are made in the image of likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Since humans reproduce after their own kind, it follows that the offspring of humans are also in the image of God just as their parents are. Therefore, to take the life of an unborn child conceived in the image of God is to destroy the image of God in the world. Abortion is murder.

Many pro-abortionists would admit that "biological life" begins at conception, but deny that it is human. They will argue, the unborn is not really human until it is born." What kind of life is it before this fetus is born? Is it a monkey? A banana tree? A mosquito? What is it? Is it mineral, vegetable or animal? When vets examine a pregnant gorilla they have no difficulty telling you that it is not human or plant life or any other kind of life. They know even without testing that it is a baby gorilla. The chromosomal makeup of the cell demands that it is human life. At the time of conception not only does the life begin, but his life contains all the genetic programming necessary to determine the characteristics of the mature individual human being.

If a scientist could produce a fetus from non-living matter, he would be published in every scientific journal and he would be lauded as having "created" human life! Yet let a husband and wife beget a child and it is merely a fetus. The only difference in an unborn and baby that has been born is the difference in location and developmental size. What right have we to decide that killing a plus one day old infant is murder, and killing a minus one day old child morally acceptable? We can see that the unborn eagle is an eagle even though it has not been hatched from the egg, but seemingly cannot identify the unborn baby as a baby. No violation of moral law has occurred when a person kills a chicken or eats its egg, but killing a human or destroying its unborn is a violation of moral law. A soul is what separates human life from animal life. To take an animal's spiritless life is no crime, but to kill a human is murder.

In a first for conservation law enforcement, an Illinois man was recently charged with killing the fetuses of unborn fawns. Richard Cox pleaded guilty to charges of illegally killing a doe and two fetuses found in the slain animal. He was fined \$125 for each fetus and \$250 for the doe. Yet killing human fetuses is condoned and legal and upheld by the law. Truly, we live in a time when men "call evil good, and good evil" (Is. 5:20).

Just when is a baby a baby? Science and human philosophy are on both sides of the fence and so are many denominations. Since God created man and gave him life it seems reasonable to let His Word help resolve the issue. According to the Bible there is no distinction between human life in the womb and those who have been born. Let us take a look at what the Old Testament has to say.

In the delineation of the generations of Adam it is said that fathers lived so many years while they "beget" sons and daughters (Gen. 5:3,4,28-30). The term "beget" (Heb. Yalad). When used regarding a mother, it describes her conceiving, bearing, and giving birth to a child. When used passively regarding the child, it refers to its being born. However, when used to describe the role of the father in the literal, historical event of human procreation, it always refers to conception of fertilization, since this is the only role the father has in the birth of the child.

In Gen. 25:21,22 Rebekah conceived twins, and "the children struggled within her". Note the connection between the conception and "children". That which was conceived was called "children" (Heb. ben) between the conception and the birth. Thus, she had "children" or "sons" in her womb.

In the Law of Moses there is a law concerning pre-mature births. It also involves a discussion about pre-mature injury or death to an unborn child. "If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. "But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, "burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." (Exodus 21:22-25).

Note the following breakdown of the possible situation:

- 4) A woman with child is hurt,

- 5) her fruit depart,
- 6) and yet "no mischief (lit. "injury" or "harm") follow" No injury period! to the woman or the child? There is nothing in the context to limit the injury to the woman.), then
- 7) the guilty will be punished accordingly with a fine, but
- 8) if mischief (injury) follow then,
- 9) punishment shall be "life for life"...

There has been some differences over the phrase: "*if her fruit departs*". Men are fighting and "*hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit departs*." The life in the mother's womb is here called her "*fruit*" (Heb. Yeled). But this word is elsewhere translated "child", "boy", "son", or "young man". In fact, it is the second most common Old Testament word for "child". We find the Hebrew word translated "fruit" is the same word translated "child" in the to her 89 times it appears in the Old Testament. This is the only time it is translated "fruit" instead of "child, this it means "child". The fruit of her womb refers to human life. The Hebrews of old would have never scratched their heads wondering what kind of fruit is being discussed. It is not an apple or a banana. It is a baby which departs from her.

The word "*depart*" is translated miscarriage in some versions. It is from the Hebrew word which means to go out of the womb. Hence, "her fruit depart" simply means "her child goes forth" or "her baby is born." Notice that this expression of itself says nothing about the condition of the baby at birth, whether it is dead, alive but wounded, or alive and healthy.

If the baby is born and no harm follows - fine. Not that everything is okay. It is not fine, but the man will have to pay a fine. So, if the baby is born prematurely, but there is no injury (to either child or mother), then the man is fined for the trouble he caused (v. 22). This fine is exacted even if the baby is unharmed and normal at birth. This takes into account that both the mother and her child are endangered by the blow, just as people are endangered by kidnaping even though not harmed.

What if the baby is harmed in some way? If harm follows there must be retribution. Injury caused in the premature delivery to either the mother or the child demands the retribution of injury for injury or life for life.

If the mother or the baby was seriously hurt, the offender was subject to the law of retaliation. This law controlled and inhibited the passions of offended parties and of their relatives. The penalty inflicted upon the guilty party could not exceed the wrong suffered by his victim. They could not kill the man if the child was born crippled. However, if the child or mother died he would forfeit his own life. Thus, the expression "life for life" means that the unborn baby has "life" in exactly the same sense of that word as is possessed by the man who caused the harm -- i.e. human life. This passage is positive proof that God regards the value of an unborn child's life as just as valuable as the life of one who causes injury.

Throughout the Old Testament God is shown to have a special relationship with the unborn. This relationship is akin to that which He has with those already born. He knew David in the womb (Psalm 139:13f). God knew of Isaiah and Jeremiah before they were born (Is. 49:1; Jer. 1:4,5; 20:17,18). Job speaks of being of human life before birth (Job. 31:15,18; 3:3). God has always been mindful of man and has esteemed him (Ps. 8:3-6). If the Lord has plans for us even before we are born, what right have we to reject and ignore those plans and destroy the development of one of His greatest creations?

In Amos 2:13, God through the prophet Amos rebukes the nation of Ammon for its extreme cruelty which included ripping open the pregnant women of Gilead. Weren't sword s the usual method of killing in war? Then what made this particular ripping open of pregnant women so heinous? It is because God has always condemned the shedding of innocent blood. Human life is sacred to God. Man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). The blood of animal sacrifices were did not stir up the wrath of God. However, when Abel was killed by his brother Cain, his blood cried up to God (Gen. 4:8-11). Shortly after Noah and his family came out of the Ark the Bible tells us God introduced several new commandments which He had never before given. One of these decreed that murders should forfeit their lives (Gen. 9:6).

There are numerous kinds of sins. Yet there are only seven that God has singled out as especially detestable in His sight. The third sin in the list is "*...Hands that shed innocent blood...*" (Pr. 6:16-19).

While trying to control the Israelite slave population Pharaoh command that all Israelite male children or babies be killed as soon as they had been born. Casting out the babies was to cause death

(Ac. 7:19; Ex. 1:16-18). Would it have been any less wicked for Pharaoh to have had abortions performed to kill the babies before they were born? (the Greek word for "*babes*" in Ac. 7:19 is *brephos*, used for the unborn baby in Luke 1:41,44. The Hebrew words for "*sons*" and "*men-children*" in Exodus 1:16-18 are "ben" and "yeled", used for unborn babies in Gen. 25:21,22 and Ex. 21:22-25. The mid-wives who refused to kill this babies were blessed by God, because God is pleased with those who respect life and condemns all those who shed innocent blood.

A college professor posed the following problem to his class for their resolution. "A young girl has gotten pregnant out-of-wedlock. She has a fiancé, but he is not the father. She did nothing to plan or provoke what happened; she was simply overpowered. Her fiancé, whom she loves very much, is a very scrupulous man and will probably reject her when he finds out. Her culture is also severely strict in its views about these things, so she will be subjected to very sharp public criticism and, perhaps, even punitive legal proceedings if her condition becomes known. Indeed, it is fair to say that her entire life will be permanently ruined by this pregnancy. Even if her fiancé were to take her, an early child would greatly complicate their new marriage. Both of them are already below the poverty level and will have to move away from their hometown at the height of the pregnancy. What would you recommend for this girl?" The class Unanimously recommended that she have an abortion. "Congratulations," the professor told the class, "you have just aborted JESUS".

It is just as wrong to kill an unborn baby as a new born baby. When Jesus was crucified on the cross this was considered murdering an innocent man. When Herod murdered the children of Bethlehem he was taking the lives of innocent children. If Mary had decided on an abortion she too would have been killing an innocent life.

The conception and birth of both John the Baptist and Jesus demonstrate the Biblical view of life in the womb. It is said of John's mother, Elizabeth, that she "conceived a son (Lk. 1:36). Later in the context we are informed that Elizabeth "brought forth a son." (Lk. 1:57). These two verses refer to the same mother and the same son in the same context. One verse describes the conception and the other describes the birth, but both call the child a "son". After Elizabeth had conceived (v. 24), but before she had given birth, the life "in her womb" is called a "babe" or "baby" (*brephos*). Jesus for example is called a "babe" (*brephos*) lying in a manger (Lk. 2:12,16). Both were babies whether born or still in its mother's womb.

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant Mary the mother of Jesus came for a visit. Hearing the greeting of Mary "*the baby leaped in her womb*" (Lk. 1:41). Blobs don't leap, neither do tissues and tumors...only life leaps. A person has emotions and the unborn infant of Elizabeth showed this when he got a few feet from the unborn infant of Mary! Elizabeth said "...the babe (*brephos*) leaped in my womb for joy" (Lk. 1:44). It is interesting too, that the Greek word "*brephos*" used in Luke 1:41 to refer to the unborn child is the same as used in Luke 18:15. which states that "they were bringing even their babies to him" that is Jesus. The terms used here in the New Testament clearly identify an unborn baby just as much a human being as those already born.

In Luke 1:43, Elizabeth addressed Mary as "*the mother of my Lord*". At the time Mary was expecting but had not yet given birth. When Jesus could not be much more than a developing embryo, Elizabeth greets Mary as the "mother of my Lord," not as the "future mother of my potential Lord." Luke later records that Mary was carrying "the holy offspring" (Lk. 1:35), not mere "fetal tissue".

When King Herod the Great was seeking to have all the male babies under two years old in Bethlehem killed while seeking to kill Jesus this would be considered a horrible murdering even by today's standards (Matthew 2:16). Yet, what if Herod succeeded to kill Jesus before he was born, what would that be? Luke 2:12,16 shows that the children he slew were "babes." Earlier in Luke 1:44 it was seen that unborn children are also "babes". If it is unacceptable to kill babes after they are born how can it be acceptable to kill them after they are born?

Who is Guilty of Murder in Abortion?

■ **The Mother**

The young mother stepped into her doctor's office carrying her little one year old boy in her arms. She sat down across the desk from the physician and said, "Doctor, I need you to help me with a problem.

My little boy is only one year old, and I am pregnant again and I simply cannot have two children so close together." The doctor thought for a moment and then asked, "What would you like for me to do?" Without hesitation, the mother replied, "Well, I'd like to have an abortion, of course." The doctor sat silently thinking, then replied, "I think I can suggest a better solution to your problem. If you truly object to having two children so close together, let me just kill the child sitting on your lap, and let the other live. You, see, it is so much easier to kill a child already born--and it makes no difference to me which one I kill. Besides, due to possible complications, it would be somewhat dangerous for you if I undertake to kill the child in your womb." The young mother jumped to her feet, clutched her little child to her and began to verbally assault the physician as a murderer. A few carefully chosen words from the doctor soon calmed the young lady and convinced her that his offer to commit murder was no worse than her request for the destruction of her unborn child. The only difference would be in the age of the victim!

The previous story illustrates the fact well concerning the need to recognize who is guilty of murder when an abortion is performed. The doctor would have been no more of a murderer than the mother who was putting a contract out on her unborn child's life.

In the nine wars since 1775, there has only been 667,286 American battle deaths. Today, it takes American mothers only five months to kill as many. An estimated 1.5 million abortions are performed in the U.S. every year.

Some mothers may argue: "I have a right to my own body." God is the Creator. He made men and women. He has the first right over our body. No woman has a right to interfere with a life God has created.

Others will argue that it is just unwanted tissue. After all, no one would call you a murderer if you had a tumor removed. However, from the moment of conception the so called "tissue" is distinct from that of the mother. Since half of the genetic material that makes us this "tissue" is from the father, every cell of it is different from every cell of the mother. Both the mother and the child have their own distinct DNA. This is not true of a tumor. Furthermore, God has given and recognizes the distinct soul in her womb. Thus, to remove the tissue would be equivalent to taking a life.

■ **The Doctor**

The pregnant mother puts a contract out on the fetus' life, pays the doctor, and he is the official murderer. He is just as guilty of murdering the child as were the Romans who murdered Christ being delivered to them of the Jews.

Abortion is now one of the most if not the most frequently performed operation in our country. How inconsistent that one group of doctors are working to save human life by operating on babies before they are born and another group of doctors are methodically killing these unborn babies. Adding to this irony is a Memphis doctor who was fined \$5,000 for killing an Eagle. However, he could go out the next day and perform five abortions and be paid \$1,000 each.

■ **The Father**

If the father of the child suggests or requests that the mother abort, he is also an accessory after the fact. If he pays for it and promotes it in any way, he is just as guilty. If he is apathetic about the aborting of his child than he is also guilty. Unfortunately, many fathers never have a chance to defend the life of their unborn child.

■ **Anyone Who Encourages it**

In short, anyone who encourages abortion in any way or anyone who looks the other way and will not help stop abortion is just as guilty as the mother, father or doctor. Once I had a grandmother who was a Christian proudly inform me that she paid for her daughter's abortion. She defended it on the grounds that she did want the responsibility to care for it and she did not want it come into a world where it would not be taken care of. Parts of the Government which support and advocate abortion are just as guilty. Organizations who support it, defend it, and educate young mothers to use it as a viable option are encouraging the murder of innocent babies. Added to this list could be anyone who is just being apathetic about abortion and not trying to do good (Js. 4:17).

Ronald Reagan spoke to a pregnant woman named Victoria, who said, "In this society we save whales, we save timber wolves and bald eagles and Coke bottles. Yet, everyone wanted me to throw away my baby."

The burden of proof is upon the pro-abortionist. The fact that life has been exterminated is proven by the fact of the abortion itself. The abortionist must first show conclusive evidence that killing unborn babies is acceptable to God. If he cannot, then to justify or participate would be acting in doubt and without Divine authority, and this also is sinful (Rom. 14:23; Col. 3:17; 2 Jn. 9-11).

We should never forget that if ever there was a killing without mercy, a death without dignity, it was on Calvary. Yet from that killing, came the grace of God to be poured out upon all men throughout the subsequent ages. Like a murderer long ago prayed, so all abortionist can cry out "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness,.." (Ps. 51;14) and God through Christ can even forgive murderers.

The Victim in Abortion

In January of 1984 President Reagan made a statement that fetuses often feel pain during abortions in his speech to the National Religious Broadcasters Convention. He said, *"How can we survive as a free nation when some decide that others are not fit to live and should be done away with?...Medical science doctors confirm that when the lives of the unborn are snuffed out, they often feel pain -- pain that is long and agonizing."* This statement was met with an immediate attack from the Pro Choice Advocates. They are convinced that abortion is merely a "procedure" to remove "fetal material" which is simply lifeless matter from a woman's womb. The idea of causing intense agony to an unborn child is repulsive and thus damaging to their stand.

A Dr. Ervin E. Nichols speaking for the 24,000 members of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOB) challenged Reagan on this point. A group of twenty-six prominent physicians wrote in support of President Reagan's remark. "Mr. President in drawing attention to the capability of the human fetus to feel pain, you stand on firmly established ground." They went on to cite eighteen years of studies showing the *"remarkable responsiveness of the human fetus to pain, touch, and sound. Observations of the fetal electrocardiogram and the increase in fetal movements in saline abortions indicate that the fetus experiences discomfort as it dies."* Later, in an interview with the WASHINGTON TIMES, Dr. Nichols admitted that he lacked expertise in fetology.

A year later on January 22, 1985, Dr. Bernard Nathanson released a 28-minute video production depicting the agonizing death throes of a twelve-week-old unborn baby. The film very graphically verified the agony of abortion. *"Dr. Bernard Nathanson used to be an abortionist. He ran the largest abortion clinic in the Western world and personally performed over 5,000 abortions before he began to ask what he--and we--were doing. Then at considerable sacrifice, he changed his mind and turned against legal abortion."* (Joseph Sobran, INDIANAPOLIS STAR, June 30, 1984). In this video entitled THE SILENT SCREAM, Nathanson observed that *"the unborn child demonstrates graphically all the responses appropriate to one subjected to an unbearable agony: the accelerating heart rate, the grimacing, the violent churning and agitation, and the pathetic attempt at flight."* He added: *"If a rabbit or a dog were the subject of this film, the animal rights legions would come thundering onto center stage, like the U.S. Cavalry."*

It is interesting to note that the Doctor who performed the abortion couldn't bear to watch the film to the end. He rushed out to the room where it was shown and never performed another abortion though he had performed several thousand before. After seeing this film Reagan described it as *"a chilling documentation of the horror of abortion"*.

This only substantiates that which God knew millennia before. David declared, *"For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."* (Ps. 139:13-16).

Questions:

1. The term "abortion" is not mentioned in the Bible? Is it a Bible topic? Explain.

2. How did the early Christians view abortion in their day?
3. How to pro-abortionist view a fetus?
4. Why is human life so important to God?
5. What kind of life is the fetus in the womb of a female human?
6. What value does the Law of Moses place on the life and death of an unborn child according to Exodus 21:22-25?
7. Explain God's special relationship with David, Isaiah, Jeremiah when there were in the womb?
8. Why did God bless the mid-wives in Exodus 1?
9. True False It is just as wrong to kill an unborn baby as a new born baby.
10. How did the unborn baby John respond to Mary's visit?
11. Why is the argument "It is my body and I well get an abortion if I want" made by mothers invalid?
12. When abortion is legal can a doctor still be guilty of murder before God when performing one? Explain.
13. How can a father be guilty of murder when his wife or the mother is the one getting the abortion?
14. True False The burden of proof that abortion is acceptable is upon the pro-abortionist.

15. Can an unborn child feel pain? What does this mean in regard to abortion?

Application & Discussion:

1. Is a miscarriage or aborting a dead child the same as having an abortion? Is such murder? Explain.

2. What are some of the other arguments used to support abortion? Refute these.

3. In view of the fact that the Supreme Court has recently overturned Roe v. Wade is there any more work the righteous need to do to support life and fight against abortion?

Homework: Do what you can to support the fight against abortion in this nation. Remember, *“righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Prov. 14:34).

What Does the Bible Say About...

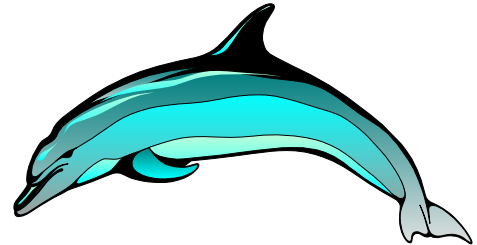
Animal Rights

On the set of the movie, *Shawshank Redemption* there was a scene where a man was going to feed his pet bird a grub. An animal rights advocate was assigned to the bird. When she heard what was about to happen she intervened. "Birds, like grubs! There is nothing harmful at all about a bird eating a grub. They do it all the time!" cried the director. The animal rights advocate explained, "I know, but what about the rights of the grub."

Just what does the Bible say about the rights of animals? Consider several important questions should be raised about this popular rights movement and look to God's Word for the answers.

Do Animals Have Rights?

Animals have no fundamental rights. Rights are either God-given or evolve out of the democratic process. God has never outlined any rights for animals like that of man. Politically animals have no rights. The concept of "rights" is very powerful in the American political Lexicon. It carries no small amount of clout. Thomas Jefferson did not say, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all **animals** are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among the are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."



By definition animals have no rights. A "right" is "something to which one has a just claim" or "The power or privilege to which one is justly entitled" or "A power, privilege or condition of existence to which one has a natural claim of enjoyment or possession." Implicit in all of these dictionary definitions is that in order to have rights one must know that he has a just claim to them; one must be able to assert them.

An animal cannot avail himself of legal protection through our judicial system or otherwise. It is only if humans intervene on its behalf will it have any protection at all. Most rights are based on the ability of people to agree on a social contract, the ability to make and keep agreements. Animals cannot possibly reach such an agreement with other creatures. They cannot respect anyone else's rights.

When I suggested to my dog that animals had rights, he just laid their on the floor looked up at me and waged his tail, the hamster continued to go nowhere in his wheel, our rabbit's ears did perk up, but she did not have anything to say, and the turtle was shell shocked.

Are Animals Intelligent?

Let us begin by looking at just one species. Are dolphins the most intelligent animals? In the Time magazine article "Can Animals Think?" Eugene Linden wrote, *"Most scientists now take seriously the flood of new evidence suggesting that other species share with humans higher mental abilities"*. (57). In the same article: *"...human analytical abilities remain vastly superior to anything demonstrated elsewhere in the animal kingdom"* 61. The New York Times science section most intelligent being the dolphin. *"As much as puppies, or pandas or even children, dolphins are universally beloved. They seem to cavort and frolic at the least provocation, their mouths fixed in what looks like a state of perpetual merriment, and their behavior and enormous brains suggest an intelligence approaching that of human beings or even, some might argue, surpassing it."* Okay, but has any dolphin other build a highway, established a college or hospital or even invent one automobile?

Man and man alone has been blessed with the unique ability to make things. Sure, bees make

hives, birds make nests, and beavers make dams, but those productions are purely instinctive. Man's creations involve reason and free will. "In making houses, bridges, or any other of their artifacts, men invent and select. They are truly artists, as animals are not." Men build machines which are themselves productive. Human thinking is discursive and involves language. Animals make sounds and communicate thought. No animal ever utters a sentence which asserts something to be true or false. Not even Flipper. Nonetheless, the Malibu City Council declaring that Malibu was a "human/dolphin shared environment," and urging "warmer relationships between humans and animals." Francis Jeffrey said, "This is a new concept, to say that dolphins are citizens of the community." Mary Frampton, the head of the local Save Our Coast group, told the council that "the dolphins thank you." Why can't the little talking geniuses communicate this message themselves? Note, that the apostle Peter clearly still regarded donkeys as unable to speak (2 Pet. 2:16).

Man only an historical development. Men transmit ideas and institutions, a whole tradition of culture, from one generation to another, and it is this which accounts for the history of the human race. Who is it that writes books about the history and development of animals? Man, never animals.

Is Man a Mere Animal?

Evolutionists hold that the difference between man and other mammals is one of degree, not kind. They believe that all animals have intelligence, man just has more of it. This logic presupposes man evolved from animals. Biologically, a qualitative physical distinction between people and animals is not easily recognizable and may not be provable. Biologists have historically grouped people as animals. David Barnes wrote, *"...when we treat animals like humans, it does not make us more human or them less animal. It tends to make us appear as animals."* In the beginning God made man as a distinct creation from the animals (Gen. 1:26f).

Are Some Animals More Important than Others?

It appears that "Animals rights" activists want to save only the cute ones. Dolphins were being caught in nets designed to trap tuna, Starkist launched an advertising campaign to declare their tuna is "dolphin safe". We kill maybe 2 dolphins for every 1 million tuna. What about the poor tuna? Are they just a bunch of useless creatures? Dolphins are smart and cute. They even have a smile on their face! Plus, they try to talk to us. Too bad we're not intelligent enough to understand them. Consider the evil shrimpers happen to nab a couple of sea turtles now and then while murdering zillions of shrimp. Rats, mice, spiders and ants are not protected, but exterminated. One is no less the creation of God than the other. Have you ever heard of "Save the roach" campaign? Have you ever seen anyone picketing for the rights of bugs in front of the establishment operated by the Orkin man.

Are Animals More Important than People?

Perhaps a better question to ask is: Are animals more important than people. Who cares if thirty thousand jobs are lost to protect of few birds? Anyway, a guy in Florida was hauled into court for stealing some sea turtle eggs. the judge found him guilty and fined him \$106,000. he said, "Wait a minute, these are not sea turtles, these are sea turtle eggs, and there's no law saying I can't steal them." "Sir," the judge replied, "they're going to be sea turtles. So you're Guilty." The guy was stuck with a \$106,000 fine. All this makes me wonder about our priorities. When does a sea turtle's life begin? At conception or when it's laid.? Over one and a half million unborn babies are killed every year through abortion. Abortion is a protected right of every woman. Yet we have more and more laws "protecting" animals. Truly, America has gone to the dogs, owls, mice, monkeys, and even the grubs.

Biblical Usage of Animals

I personally do not care to have a cat as a pet. This "dislike" of felines comes honestly. Growing up with four sister who each had four cats will create "felinephobia" in the stoutest of hearts. Does it matter who one treats animals? Just how should animals be used and what constitutes abuse?

Some believe all hunters are necessarily evil. The movie THE BEAR showed hunters as ruthless,

unfeeling and despicable - the bears loving, cute and harmless. Many suffer with what has been called the "Bamby Syndrome". These are against hunting deer and bears and other cute animals. Why is it not wrong to kill cows and hogs? How about a movie called THE COW or THE HOG? Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) ran a full-page ads comparing mass murderer Jeffrey Dahmer's behavior to that of the meat industry. Don Matthews of PETA explained the ads by saying: "we are at war. We'll do what we need to win. If we got rid of the slave trade, we can get rid of the beef industry."

God said He gave the animals for man to hunt, kill and eat (Gen. 15:9-11; Lev. 11:3-22; Dt. 12:15,16, 20-24; 14:3-23; 22:6,7; Mt. 15:36; 17:27; Lk. 5:4,6; 9:12=17; Jn. 21:9-10). Hunting just for the sake of hunting is not good. In Star Trek IV, Spock observed, "To hunt a species to extinction is not logical."

According to the Old Testament animals were to be used for sacrifice to God (Gen. 16:9-11; Ex. 12:1-10; 13:12,13; 34:19,20; Lev. 22:27-30; Jdg. 6:19; 13:19; 1 Ki. 8:63). This was done to comply with God's will, showing great respect and love for God, and to teach the high cost of sin. Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep in sacrifice to God during the temple dedication (2 Chr. 7:5).

The Bible also approves of using animals for transportation (Gen. 22:3; 42:26; Jn. 12:14,15). During the wilderness wanderings oxen were used to help transport parts of the Tabernacle. However, the Levites were to carry the ark.

Animals are used throughout the Bible as a means of educating man about God and how God expects men to conduct themselves (Job 12:7,8). Today, the medical field teaches and learns from the use of animals. If there is no fundamental difference between animals and people, then the amount of benefit deriving from an experiment on an animal can justify that experiment no more than it can justify an experiment on one's neighbor. Experimentation on Jewish prisoners by Nazi doctors is equal to an experiment on a rat.

God ordained the use of animal skins for clothing and other useful products. We have tennis racket strings and sticky substance on the back of postage stamps as products from animals. Man has invented numerous ways to imply God's creation to provide useful products for consumers. In contrast, animals rights activists have been throwing blood on people wearing fur coats.

Animals can be used as pets, however that does not mean animal life is equal to human life. The story told by the prophet Nathan to King David (2 Sam. 12:1-6) spoke of the affection of the man for the lamb. The main point of the story is not the unkindness toward the lamb, but rather the unkindness toward the poor man. The rich man should have killed one of his own lambs.

Biblical Care of Animals

Despite all the animal sacrifices the Law of Moses included their care. Provisions were made in the Law of Moses for animals resting (Ex. 23:12). One's own domesticated animals were to be treated well (Dt. 25:4; Pr. 12:10). Predatory animals, which may threaten people or domesticated animals, were killed (1 Sam. 17:34-35; Ps. 74:12-14; 91:11-13; Is. 27:1; Lk. 10:19). Note, the Heavenly Father's concern for the birds of the air and the grass and lilies of the field as illustrations of His concern for mankind (Mt. 6:26-30).

Animals often treat each other with no respect, and they have no redress, absent of human intervention. Look at what they do to each other. They tear each other limb from limb. Humans do that too, but it is not the accepted norm. Animals don't think about right and wrong. They exist in the anarchical state of nature: survival of the fittest. They are guided by instinct. Humans have a responsibility toward lower species and must treat them humanely. We should not allow elephants to become extinct just so a few people can have ivory carvings. Please note that none of the animals mankind raises for his own benefit are on any endangered species list. The way to save endangered species is to give someone a benefit and duty in preserving them. On their own, animals have no chance to make it in this world.

Superiority of Man over Animals

Today, activists endeavor to elevate animals to occupy a position equivalent to humans. They argue, "Animals are the most suppressed minority in the world." Thus, they blur the lines between animals

and human beings. Some have even assigned them rights and privileges that many human beings don't yet enjoy. Our government spends millions to protect animals but stands by while millions of unborn children are aborted daily? Some abortions are federally funded. In our highest courts, the rights of criminals often exceed the rights of victims. Truly, evil is pawned off as righteousness and righteousness as evil (Is. 5:20).

Jesus clearly made a distinction between man and animal, *"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."* (Mt. 10:29-31) *"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"* (Mt. 6:26). The greatest of commandments nowhere contains: "You shall love animals as yourself" (Mt. 22:37-40). Christ valued the life of a demon-possessed man over those an entire herd of pigs (Mt. 8:28-32; Mk. 5:6-13). On the other hand animals by nature have little appreciation for spiritual matters (Mt. 7:6).

Man was given the position of dominion because of his distinctiveness from animals. He is made in the image of God. Animals are not. Man is a creature of logic, morals and conscience. Animals are instinctive beings. Thus, animals are under the law of nature while mankind must adhere to the Law of God. Human beings are the primary species on this planet. Animals are a subspecies. People are under God's authority. Animals are under the authority of people.

Christianity is human centered not earth and animal centered. As Todd Correr wrote, "We know that the spiritual nature of humankind, our unique place in creation, is resolved by the cross, not by microbiology." Only man is created in the image of God. Man alone has a soul. Only man has an after life for which he must prepare himself. No all dogs do not go to heaven, none will go. Man must prepare himself to go to heaven. Therefore, what are you going to do about our neighbor's right, your family member's right and your right to go to heaven?

Questions:

1. Why don't animals have any rights?
2. How is the intelligence of dolphins different from that of humans?
3. Did any animal in the Bible speak? If so, how was this made possible?
4. How does evolution view the difference between humans and animals?
5. If some animals have rights, shouldn't all animals equally have rights? Explain.
6. Are all hunters evil murderers? Explain.

7. Why did God create animals?
8. How has God used animals in the Law of Moses?
9. True False Experimentation on Jewish prisoners by Nazi doctors is equal to an experiment on a rat.
10. Does God care about animals? Explain.
11. Did Jesus make a distinction between man and animals? Explain.
12. Who did God make in His image?
13. Why does man have dominion over the animals?

Application & Discussion:

1. In what ways does man abuse animals today.
2. If a human kills an innocent animals is this the same a murder? Would God approve of executing a human for such a crime?

Homework: Encourage yourself and others to always view animals as a gift from God and to treat them in accordance with the Creator's purposes.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Transgenderism

In an interview with Diane Sawyer on Friday night, April 24, 2015 Bruce Jenner came out as transgender. "I'm me. I'm a person. This is who I am. I'm not stuck in anybody's body. My brain is much more female than male," Jenner said. "For all intents and purposes, I am a woman." As a result friends and family members sent messages of support to Bruce.

- Kylie Jenner ..this isn't about me. I'm so proud of you, Dad. You are so brave. My beautiful Hero.
- Kris Jenner Not only was I able to call him my husband for 25 years and father of my children, I am now able to call him my hero.
- Rob Lowe I was proud of Bruce Jenner in Montreal and I'm proud of him tonight. Some have to fight more than the rest of us for their happiness.
- Oprah Winfrey: "All of us deserve the right to be loved for who we are ". Bravo #BruceJenner



Jenner claimed, "What I am doing is going to do some good and we are going to change the world." The transgender issue has become a major movement in this post-modern World. Even back in 2013 the Supreme Court in Maine had to determine whether denial of a transgender's choice of bathrooms was in violation of the state's Human Rights Act. In defense of the federal rules on school bathrooms being open to transgender students, President Obama told the Buzzfeed web site: "Anybody who has been in school, in high school, who has been a parent should realize that kids who are sometimes in the minority — kids who have a different sexual orientation or are transgender — are subject to a lot of bullying, potentially...They are vulnerable, and I think it's part of our obligation as a society to make sure everybody is treated fairly, and our kids are all loved and protected, and that their dignity is affirmed," he said.

The definition of "transgender" is simply a person gender identity or expression not matching the medical or societal norms which have resulted in them being assigned a gender with which the person does not agree. Traditionally and Biblically society has only recognized two genders: male and female. Now there is a list of some 63 different genders. This results from the fact that transgenders do not necessarily define their gender in relation to their sexual orientation. It is argued the development of the brain is what determines one's sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, etc. Furthermore, they may have a body which says they are one gender and a brain which tells them the opposite. Such individuals claim they are "trapped" in the wrong body.

Definition

The transgender movement has created so much confusion for this postmodern world, some do not know whether they are a boy or a girl. For example, a gay couple may argue that they are really not homosexual because even though they are biologically identified as being female, one of them identifies herself with their male gender. As a result, the term "homosexual" technically cannot be used to describe an intimate relationship between a man and a man or a woman and a woman. It is argued therefore that

what has been called a homosexual couple may be redefined as “heterosexual.” As a result one cannot really know who is truly a boy or a girl.

Gender Transitioning Solutions

What is the solution for those who are “trapped” in the wrong body? Bruce Jenner has underwent a transitioning process into Caitlyn Jenner. Many transgenders have tried a variety of transgender transitioning solutions, such as, hormone treatment and sex reassignment surgery.

However, “Dr. Paul R. McHugh, the former psychiatrist-in-chief for Johns Hopkins Hospital and its current Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry, said that transgenderism is a ‘mental disorder’ that merits treatment, that sex change is ‘biologically impossible’” (CNSNews.com). Part of the problem with these attempts to transition from one gender into another is the high failure rate. The National Institute of Health reports that nearly half of all those who go through this process experience depression to the point of suicide. A Swedish study found that between 1973 to 2003 those who had sex-reassignment had a much higher rate of suicide, death, and long-term psychiatric issues.

Why can’t medical science help correct the problem of individuals who are trapped in the wrong body? DNA determines biological sex. The chromosomes one receives from their parents at the point of conceptions cannot be changed by any amount of treatment or surgery. When conception takes place, the father gives the child twenty-three chromosomes and so does the mother. These forty-six chromosomes will pair up into twenty-three sets. The twenty-third pair of chromosomes will determine the baby’s gender. The mother always contributes an X chromosome. It is the father’s contribution which will determine the sex of the child. If he passes along an X chromosome the baby will be female (XX). If he contributes a Y chromosome the baby will develop into a boy (XY). Bruce Jenner was hoping to “re-emerge as myself.” However, his twenty-third pair of chromosomes is XY causing every cell in his body and brain to be hard wired as male. He can never really experience what it is like to be in a woman’s body, in which every cell has the XX chromosome. Until science can find a way to replace Bruce Jenner’s Y chromosome with an X in every cell in his body and brain, he will never become Caitlyn.

The real issue regarding changing genders has to do with the Creator of genders and His laws of science: *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’ ... God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”* (Gen. 1:26-27).

How Christians Should Deal With Transgenders

- **Encourage them to Seek Proper Treatment**

Just as the Good Samaritan helped the man get treatment (Luke 10), so all those who may be suffering with physical, mental, and spiritual ailments need help. The world with its rejection of the Creator and men and women, no absolutes in truth and morality, sexual immorality, etc. has robbed them of their identity. They are not “trapped” in the wrong body, but their minds have been conformed to this world.

- **Encourage them to Change their Heart**

One thing the transgender movement has right: the conflict over gender identity begins in the mind or brain. If the mind or heart feeds of philosophies of men, it will result in such things as confusion over gender. *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Proverbs 23:7). Christ calls on us to change the heart, thus transforming the mind. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (Romans 12:1,2). The world wants to press us into their world of gender confusion and sexual immorality. The solution is not genetics, hormone therapy, surgery etc. Thinking the way the Creator designed you is the key. Believing you are a boy when God created you a girl does not change the fact you are and always will be the gender nature has assigned you at conception. Believing or not believing something doesn’t make it true or false. The truth can set one free from being “trapped” in gender identity confusion (John 8:32).

- **Encourage Them to Seek God’s Forgiveness**

During the first century homosexuals and effeminate were a common part of the Roman world.

The city of Corinth was known for its excessive immorality. Even in the heathen, pagan Roman empire (notorious for its debauchery) the proverbial phrase “to Corinthanize” meant “to live a promiscuous life” (Collin’s Free Online Dictionary). Even in Corinth the Gospel could be preached, souls were forgiven, and lives were changed. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, *“and such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Promoters of the Transgender Movement

Many of us who grew up in the seventies remember a cross-dressing corporal Klinger on the hit show M.A.S.H. played by Jamie Farr. Farr’s character on the show behaved this way, not because he was confused about his gender identity, but because he was hoping to be discharged from the Army on a section eight. Today, this character would be considered normal and perhaps even a hero. Why the change and who are these change agents who are promoting transgenderism as proper behavior?

- **Popularized Social Gender Norms**

Some of the confusion about gender identity in our culture arises because of strict gender norms. Boys will like blue and girls must wear pink. In the past the ideas were that girls could not be surgeons and boys could not be nurses. Who made these rules? Are these genuine signs and proof of gender? What are the real traits of masculinity and femininity? The Bible does not discuss culturally stereotypical gender roles. Many so-called “tomboys” have turned out to be a worthy woman as a wife and mother. Being able to put in electrical switches and do wood work does not make her any more of a man or less of a woman. Popular social gender norms based on human traditions are not the standard.

- **Problematic Parenting**

A two year old girl starts playing with toy cars and trucks. She likes pink instead of blue. At three she loves to spend time in the garage with her father while he works on the car or with her grandfather doing carpentry in the backyard. The postmodern world claims she was really born a boy and trapped in a girl’s body. So the parents give her a little boy hair cut and start dressing her like a boy. One thing is for sure the parents are actively at this point trying to turn their daughter into a son. The Bible gives this hope (which can also be a warning): *“train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). This is not a case of “nature” but one of “nurture.” In the illustration it is a case of problematic parenting. Parents are not raising their children in the *“nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Eph. 6:4), but blindly following the popularized social gender norms. Other parenting problems which can have an adverse effect on children and their gender identification are broken homes and mothers who are domineering and overbearing and fathers who are effeminate or delinquent.

- **Postmodernism’s Political Agenda**

The parents have a young daughter they are trying to help transition into a boy because they found her playing one day with a set of toy power tools. The press is alerted and the liberal media has a new set of star parents to promote their anti-Creator agenda. Even a United States President has jumped on board. Target has opened its restrooms to transgenders and the showers are free to be used by transgenders at Planet Fitness.

- **Psychological Disorders**

Although it is no longer viewed as politically correct, transgenderism has been considered a psychological disorder in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition, Text Revision or DSM-IV-TR. Gender Identity Disorder (GID), or gender dysphoria which are the technical terms used in the medical field. It is when an individual desires to change one’s gender or take on an opposite gender role. Psychologist used to treat patients suffering from acute anxieties over their confusion about gender identity. Back in 2010 France was the first nation to cease recognizing GID as a mental disease. So if someone feels like they are not a boy, but a hamster and insist on eating and living like one and furthermore refuses to talk, what should mom and dad do? Should they take them to a specialist or to the vet? Perhaps, they might want to be a good parent and assist their son into transitioning into a hamster. After all, he is “trapped” in the wrong body.

- **Physical Mutations and Diseases**

Some proponents of transgenderism point out that there is physiological proof of various gender identities. However, medical science has long known about these problems caused by hormone imbalances or birth defects. A mutation or a physical abnormality is not proof of transgenderism any more than a boy born with twenty-four digits is not a human but an alien. Or that a girl born without ears is a crocodile. Veterinarians do not have a problem telling if a dog is male, even if it does swat instead of hike it's leg to "go to the bathroom."

It has been pointed out that some babies are born with variants in the twenty-third pair of chromosomes which determine the gender or sex of a child. Normally a girl has an XX and a male has XY as their twenty-third chromosome pair. There are several other not so common combinations of the sex chromosome, such as, X known as Turner's syndrome, Klinefelter's syndrome (XXY), and other syndromes like XYY, XYYY, XXX, XXXX, and even XXXXX. Although these mutations may present physiological problems, the fact remains, if there is a Y chromosome provided by the father, the baby is always a male. If a child has no Y chromosomes but only X's, it is always a girl. You might ask why about the Y chromosome. Because only the father can provide the Y at conception. Today, many post-modernists want to pick and choose what science they will accept and what science it will reject.

- **Physicians Playing God**

In the past gender assignment was done by medical staff when a child was born. There were birth defects which confused the doctors. To deal with this the 1950 Hopkins model was used to determine gender assignment and a "sex-assignment" operation. Instead of waiting to check chromosomes or the ancient wait and see method, these physicians impatiently played God by taking matters into their own surgical hands. Still it is God who makes male and female humans. *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them"* (Gen. 1:26-27). Furthermore, *"for God is not the author of confusion but of peace"* (1 Cor. 14:33). The problem with confusion over gender is not God's failure as a creator who had made everything *"very good"* (Gen. 1:31). Man in his sin and ignorance has created the confusion. If one just goes by appearance it would seem that the spotted hyenas are all male and at first glance it would appear that dolphins, alligators and crocodiles are all female. Biology has learned to tell the difference by closer observation. However, great care must be taken when check the gender of either an alligator or a crocodile. Perhaps, we need to heed the warning of Jesus in this matter: *"do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment"* (John 7:24).

Debunking the Arguments in Support of Transgenderism

Those to promote the legitimacy of transgenderism are not without their arguments designed to support this belief. However, as will be seen, all of these are not supported by the Scriptures.

A. "People are born that way."

During an interview Bruce Jenner (who has transitioned into Caitlyn Jenner) said: "I have always been confused with my gender identity since I was this small. ...I've tried to explain it this way. God's looking down, making little Bruce. He says, 'O.K., what are we gonna do with this one? Make him a smart kid, very determined[']... and then, when he's just finishing, he says, 'Let's wait a second.' God looks down and chuckles a little bit and says, 'Hey, let's give him the soul of a female.'"

Once again God is blamed for pulling a cruel joke on someone by giving them the wrong body. In Bruce's case there is no conflict with having one of the chromosome syndromes, such as, XXY or hormonal imbalances. And as far as we known his external physical traits are definitely male. Yet somehow he knows that God gave him a female soul. When God created humans on the sixth day, He made them *"male and female."* (Genesis 1:26,27). Furthermore, the Bible says nothing about souls being either male or female. In fact, Jesus said, *"for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven"* (Matthew 22:30).

Some might claim that being born a transgender has something to do with their genetic make up. Identical twins have identical genes. If one is genetically programmed to be transgender so is the other. Yet, there are many cases of one twin being perfectly content with their gender and the other one having

severe gender identity issues.

Even if transgenderism was to be argued by the pseudo-science of Darwinian evolution, it does not make any sense. Evolution assumes random mutations change species based on natural selection of the fittest. How does transgenderism benefit the survival of a human species? Unless they reproduce, the genes responsible are not passed on to another generation of transgenders. Therefore, this argument results in a dead-end.

■ **“God Made Mankind First and then Genders”**

Heath Adam Ackley in his coming out sermon originally called “The Genderqueer Gospel” argued

Binary gender (division into male and female) isn't clearly defined with words such as “man” or “woman” until the twenty-second verse of the second chapter of Genesis,” the transgender man wrote CP. Before that division, Genesis 2 refers to the first human as “ha'adam,” the creature made of earth. For this reason, Ackley took on the name “Adam” to identify himself as a human before and beyond considerations of gender.

When God separated the first human into two genders, Ackey argues they were incomplete. Only in Christ are they made whole again. This contradicts what God said about humans in Genesis 5:2: *“He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.”* Furthermore his beliefs are in conflict with Genesis 2:24: *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

■ **“God looks at the heart and not Gender”**

It is argued that God does not look at one's gender but on their heart. When Samuel expressed surprise at God's choice of young David as Israel's next king *“the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’”* (1 Samuel 16:7). However, this passage is not proof that God does not consider one's gender when making leadership choices. After all, all the kings of Judah were male. All the apostles chosen by Christ were male. All the preachers, deacons, and elders of the New Testament church were to be male. The passage is not discussing David's gender but contrasting his masculine appearance as a young shepherd boy to that of his elder brothers. It also focuses on inner character.

■ **Eunuchs Were Transgender**

It is assumed by those who desire to use the Bible to support transgenderism that eunuchs were transgender. Many will quote Matthew 19:11-12 to make this point. Jesus told His disciples, *“all cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”* Are the “eunuchs” of the Bible transgender? To answer one must consider the definition of a eunuch in light of the first century culture. The term “eunuch” comes from the Greek *eunouchos*, meaning *euné* (bed) and *echein* (to have charge of), the word eunuch literally means “chamberlain.” There are three types of eunuchs mentioned by Jesus in the passage above. 1) There are those who were born eunuchs. This is perhaps referring to some birth defect. 2) Next, some men were forced to be eunuchs. 3) Finally, Jesus mentions those who chose to be eunuchs due to their personal choice. In such cases, no physical changes may have been necessary. He was making a personal, mental and/or spiritual choice not to marry. Perhaps, Paul was making reference to this in his letter to the Corinthians. *“But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife”* (1 Corinthians 7:32,33). Just because a man is made by other men or nature a eunuch does not make him a female or an individual with no gender. The Bible facts regarding eunuchs is that God makes them men from the moment of conception regardless of birth defects. The Bible refers to all eunuchs as male, such as, *“man of Ethiopia, a eunuch”* (Acts 8:26-39). No where in scriptures are eunuchs said to be confused about their gender. They are never found claiming to be women “trapped in a male body.” None of these eunuchs are seen in the Bible seeking to transition into a woman. Transgender people are NOT eunuchs and

cannot never be considered a eunuch.

■ **“Gender is not an a Part of Christianity”**

Using the statement in Galatians 3:28: *“there is no male and female”* proponents of transgenderism argue that God does not recognize genders and thus Christians ought not to do so either. Again this verse is being jerked out of context and twisted to promote something the Holy Spirit did not intend to address. The issue is not gender identity but the equality of salvation in Christ for both men and women. The first thing students of the scriptures need to do is read the immediate context to see if the proof text being used actually is dealing with gender. *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (Gal 3:26-29).

The Bible offers no support for transgenderism. In fact, the Bible only recognizes two genders: male and female. Yet, the Word of God does offer the hope of eternal salvation to all men and women who put on Christ in baptism.

Declaring the Biblical Arguments Against Transgenderism

Having considered the arguments made for transgenderism, it is time to look at the Biblical arguments against this unscriptural belief and practice.

1. God Created Gender

The argument is the “girls are not always born female.” This is like arguing that all female foals are not born to be mares. The very definition of a “girl” is a female child. A female soul in a male body or a male soul in a female body fails to understand that souls are patterned after God who created either male or female bodies for the souls created in His image. *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”* (Genesis 1:27).

2. God Created Sex for Reproduction

God created the two genders and marriage, so they would be able to procreate within in the Divinely ordained relationship called marriage. *“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’”* (Genesis 1:28).

3. God Created Marriage

God created the marriage relationship for one man and one woman. When God brought newly created Eve to Adam, He 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 a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”* (Gen. 2:23-24). Transgenderism dishonors marriage and the family resulting from this union. Sex is to be between a man and woman in marriage. *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge”* (Heb. 13:4). Transgenderism destroys the exclusiveness of a heterosexual marriage.

4. God Condemns Homosexuality

Homosexuality is often expressed through transexuality. Transgenderism promotes and provides support for homosexuality. The Bible considers homosexuality to be an abomination. *“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination”* (Lev. 18:22). *“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them”* (Lev. 20:13).

5. God has Defined the Gender Roles

When God made male and female humans and designed the marriage relationship, He mandated they have distinct gender roles. Husbands are to be the head of the wife and provide for his family. Wives are to bear children and be in submission to their husbands (Ephesians 5:21-33). Those who are suffering with a gender identity crisis would not know what role God expects them to fulfill.

6. God Condemned Cross-dressing

Another thing the Bible calls an abomination to the Lord is men and women wearing clothes which conflicts with their gender identity. *"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God"* (Deuteronomy 22:5). The term *"abomination"* means "a disgusting thing" to God.

7. God Made Genders to Appear Distinguishable

When God created men and women, He desired for them to have distinctive appearance from each other. In other words, men look like men and women look like women. When Paul was dealing with the issue of head coverings, he told the congregation at Corinth: *"does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering"* (1 Corinthians 11:14-15).

8. God's Chain of Submission is Violated

Paul also told the Corinthians: *"But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Corinthians 11:13). When women are not submissive to their husbands the chain of submission to Christ is broken.

► God Forms Gender Identity Before Birth

As God was forming Jeremiah in his mother's womb, He knew the male child was to be His prophet. *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations"* (Jeremiah 1:5). The psalmist understood that God was the one who fashioned him in the womb and knew all about him. *"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them"* (Psalm 139:13-16). God knew both of Samson's manhood and John the Baptist as the male cousin of Jesus before either was born (Judges 13; Luke 1). God's wonderful work leaves no room for mistakes. No one is born with the "wrong body."

► God Will Not Let Effeminate Men Into the Kingdom

In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul includes a group called *malakoi* or "soft men" in a list of those *"who will not inherit the kingdom of God."* He wrote, *"do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites."* The King James uses the word "effeminate" here. Effeminate men are those who are attempting to transform their masculinity into femininity (Deut 23:17-18; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; cf. Job 36:14).

Summary

Nowhere does the Bible imply that a person's sex is negotiable or optional. The Creator says a man is a man and a woman is a woman. If you or someone you know is confused about whether they are a boy or a girl rest assured God is not the author of such confusion (1 Cor. 14:33).

Questions:

1. What is transgenderism?
2. What role does DNA play in gender assignment at conception?
3. How many genders did God create for humans?

4. How should Christians deal with transgenders?
5. What role do parents play in the problem of transgenderism?
6. Can transgenderism be a psychological disorder? Explain.
7. Can physical mutations and disease create new genders? Explain.
8. Do physicians have a right to try to change a patient's gender that has been assigned him or her a conception by the natural laws of God? Explain.
9. What does the fact that some identical twins have one who accepts his or her gender and the other rejects their gender prove about transgenderism?
10. Are the “eunuchs” of the Bible transgender?
11. Does Galatians 3:28 teach that gender is not a part of Christianity? Explain.
12. God created sex for reproduction, gender roles, and He created marriage between a man and woman. How does this condemn transgenderism?
13. True False The Bible condemns cross-dressing.
14. True False God let effeminate men into the church at Corinth.
15. How does transgenderism promote homosexuality?

Application & Discussion:

1. How does the gender neutral argument effect the pro-abortion argument that a woman has a right to her own body?

2. Can modern medicine change ones gender? Explain . What would have to take place in every strand of DNA to really change one's gender?

Homework: Be thankful to the Creator for creating you just the way He saw fit.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Antichrist

For several hundred years the hot topic among many generations has been “who is the Antichrist?” So called biblical prophecy experts throughout the years have uncovered “proof” as to the identity of the archenemy of Christianity. Some asserted that the antichrist is (was) Saddam Hussein. If your money was on him you lost out the day he was hung. If you are a fan of the Left Behind series the Secretary-General of the United Nations is your pick. Perhaps, the antichrist is a future president of the United States or a genetically-engineered super-human clone?

Oddly enough, several well-known individuals of the past and present have come forward declaring to be the antichrist. The German philosopher and son of a Lutheran minister, Friedrich Nietzsche, claimed to be the antichrist in his book, *The Antichrist*. A popular Latin American minister, Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda, asserts that he is not only God but also the antichrist. He believes the Bible is misinterpreted and the antichrist is Christ’s earthly replacement. His body is covered with tattoos of the number 666. More recently in a California rehab center Britney Spears shaved her head and screamed “I am the Antichrist!” Apparently there is an antichrist to appeal to every element of society.



Premilleinnial View of the Antichrist

In Christian eschatology (the study of the end-times) the Antichrist has come to mean a person, likeness of a person or other object that is the personification of evil. Some have picked out men from the Bible who were the antichrist, such as, Simon the Sorcerer or Judas Iscariot. Early Christians who have endured persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire often pointed to one of the Roman emperors like Nero or Caligula. Each generation seems to find its favorite nemesis who fits the role of antichrist: Attila the Hun, Mohammed, tzar Peter the Great, Napoleon, Hitler, Gorbachov, and even George Bush.

The most popular choice for the antichrist throughout history has been the Pope in Rome. Many leaders of the Protestant Reformation identified either a specific Pope or the papal office with the antichrist. They include such famous reformers as, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, John Calvin, John Knox and Huldreich Zwingli. Even the translator of the Bible into English, William Tyndale and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, publically denounced the Pope as the antichrist. As late as 1959 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod formerly declared "we reaffirm the statement of the Lutheran Confessions, that 'the Pope is the very Antichrist'." While giving a speech at the European Parliament in 1988 Pope John Paul II was loudly denounced as the Antichrist by the Leader of the Free Presbyterian Church, Ian Paisley.

The Catholic church in turn as denounced the son of Martin Luther as the Antichrist, along with other leaders of the Protestant Reformation.

The Antichrist is not...

Before determining who the Antichrist is it may be advantageous to first demonstrate who he is not. The Antichrist is not a false Christ or pseudochrist like David Koresh who a few years ago in Waco claimed to be the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly warned His disciples that “*Then if anyone says to you,*

'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible even the elect" (Matt. 24:23,24). As will be seen latter in this study the Antichrist's beliefs would naturally preclude him from claiming to be Christ.

Apocalyptic passages are most often appealed to as proof of the Antichrist's identity. Many mistake the Antichrist with the *"man of sin"* in 2 Thessalonians 2:2-4. In this context the *"son of perdition"* is called *"man of sin"* and *"lawless one."* He is not Satan, but he does work with him (2:9). One of the most common views is the *"son of perdition"* is the pope or papacy. "The preface to the original King James Version of the bible names the pope as the 'Man of Sin'." (Barton 127). Many of the early reformers, such as, Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli held this view. Many New Testament Christians have agreed with this. However, the Catholic pope did not exist until AD 606 and Paul said the *"mystery of lawlessness"* was already at work at the time the letter was written to the Thessalonians. The Catholic popes responded by labeling one of the reformers as the *"son of perdition."* Gaining in popularity is the belief that Mohammed and the Islamic religion represent the *"man of sin."* However, Mohammed was not born until AD 570. Others have suggested one of the Roman Emperors. Nevertheless, these have not continued to exist till the Lord's coming. Trying to connect this with the destruction of Jerusalem has led some to look at some zealot or Pharisee seizing the Temple just before the Roman's destroyed it in 70 AD. Yet, how would this relate to the gentile saints at Thessalonica. Over the years many political figures have been identified as the *"son of perdition."* Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, etc. have all been popular choices. Notice in the text it is a spiritual rebellion not a political rebellion under consideration. Nonetheless, some still are looking from some world political leader to raise up and take the throne of God. Hal Lindsey has said, "I believe that this very man lives right now somewhere in Europe." Modern premillennialists have marked the sea beast in Revelation 13 as the *"son of perdition."* This is referring to a political entity such as the Roman Empire which has been gone for centuries. One of the most common identifications with the *"son of perdition"* is to call him "the Antichrist." The term is only found in the epistles of John. The apostle specifically identified various aspects of an antichrist which would eliminate him from the list of likely suspects. The term *"antichrist"* is only found five times in the New Testament (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). The antichrist is not one individual, but many. Their antichrist is not yet to come, but many have been at work for centuries. All of them are lairs because they deny the truth about Christ being the Messiah, being the Son of God and coming in the flesh. One final idea about the *"son of perdition"* is that it is symbolic of the principle of lawlessness. Paul use personification to refer to sin as if it were human. The *"man of sin"* is defined as "an impersonation of the sinful principle spoken of by the apostle Paul in an emphatic manner" (McClintock and Strong 689).

Others claim that the Beast of Revelation 13 is the Antichrist. Certainly, there are similarities, but the two terms should not be used interchangeably. Other passages in Revelation are employed as proof that the Antichrist will be an Israelite of the tribe of Dan (Gen. 49:17; Rev. 7:1-8). Neither can the Antichrist be identified with 666. This is the number of man, not "a" or "the" man. The number 6 means imperfect, that is, one less than seven which is perfection. Man is therefore imperfect, imperfect, imperfect.

Finally, the Antichrist is not the Devil in spite of the fact that he is against Christ and is the author of all lies. The Devil knows and believes Jesus is the Christ. Nor is the Antichrist the son of Satan as popularized in the movie, The Omen where Damien bears a "666" birthmark. It should be noted the recent remake of Omen opened in theaters on 6/06/06.

"Antichrist" as Used in the New Testament

The apostle John uses the term just five times: twice in 1 Jn 2:18 ("antichrist is coming...many antichrists have come"); once in 1 Jn 2:22 ("He is antichrist who denies..."); again in 1 Jn 4:3 ("this is the spirit of the antichrist..."); and finally in 2 Jn 7 ("a deceiver and an antichrist"). John does not say one word about the Antichrist in his Revelation. Any honest student of the Bible can learn all there is about the Antichrist from these four passages in John's first two epistles. Everything else about the Antichrist is pure speculation.

The New Testament Greek term is a compound of anti meaning "opposed to or against" and khristos means "messiah or Christ." Therefore, the basic meaning of this noun is one who is opposed to the Christ or against Christ. If you were to describe someone who was opposed to smoking or abortion

you would say they were anti-smoking or anti-abortion. The term "antichrist" would be inclusive of anyone who is against or opposed to Christ. James said that anyone who loves this world is against God (Js. 4:4). Christ warned that any person who was not with Him was against Him or "antichrist" (Matt. 12:30).

Biblical View of the Antichrist

According the Bible how many Antichrist are there? Is Antichrist a single entity or many distinct persons? Of the five occurrences of the term: once it is in plural form ("even now many Antichrists have arisen" in 1 Jn 2:18-19) and four times it is singular in number. However, the contexts of each of these passages clearly identifies the Antichrist with plural pronouns or nouns: "they went out...if they had been...none of them" (1 Jn. 2:19); "many deceivers" (2 Jn 1:7). Apparently, "antichrist" is a more general term than modern men had been led to believe.

Who are these Antichrists who have gone out into the world? Those who have denied the messiahship of Christ. *"He who denies that Jesus is the Christ"* (1 Jn. 2:22). Those who are against Christ are those who deny the deity of Christ and His Father *"He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son"* (1 Jn. 2:22) and those who will not confess Jesus was God's Son (1 Jn. 2:23). Those who are opposed to Christ are those who deny His Humanity. *"And every spirit that does not confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist"* (1 Jn 4:2). *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist"* (2 Jn. 7). Early gnostics (such as, the Doceists and Ceninthians) were known to have denied the Son of God coming in fleshly form because they held that all flesh was sinful. Belief in the humanity of Jesus is essential for the Son of God to be our: Redeemer (1 Jn. 1:7); propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 2:2); mediator (1 Tim. 2:5); faithful and compassionate High Priest (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15), etc.

Can a twenty-first century Christian be an Antichrist? Anyone who is against the messiahship, deity or incarnation of Christ would be an Antichrist. As mentioned above, there are many of them in the world. The answer is a resounding - YES!

When will or did the Antichrist come? An ad was sent out several years ago for a religious meeting where one of the topics was announced as: "The Antichrist Is In the World Today." This would be of no surprise to a diligent student of the scriptures. These Antichrists have been around for nearly 2000 years. John affirmed that the Antichrist was *"now already in the world"* (1 Jn. 2:18). Many of them *"have gone out into the world"* (2 Jn. 7). If you listen to the myriad of end-time prognosticators you will learn that the Antichrist will show up to usher in the last days. Again it is written in the first epistle of John, *"children, it is the last hour"* (1 Jn 2:18). We are in the last days, which is, the Christian era (Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 2:16-17; 1 Jn. 4:3). The time of the end of the world can not be understood by the sign of the Antichrist's appearing. Jesus Himself could not pinpoint a date for His return. He could not even narrow it down to the nearest century. Concerning His Second Coming Jesus affirmed to His Apostles, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heave, but My Father only"* (Mt. 24:36).

Where is the Antichrist to appear? Is it Jerusalem? Is it Washington D.C.? John said, *"They went out from us"* (1 Jn. 2:19). These Antichrist were those that had professed Christianity. Some, however, assume that these Antichrists were never really Christians because John goes on to say that they *"were not of us"* (1 Jn. 2:19). This does not preclude them from having legitimately been disciples at one time. After all, Judas was excluded from the apostleship having transgressed and gone *"to his own place"* (Acts 1:25). But at one time Judas had *"obtained a part in this ministry"*, that is, the apostleship with Peter and the rest (Ac. 1:17). Know this, today there are many antichrists distressing the furtherance of the Gospel through deceptive lies against Christ.

False Teaching of the Antichrists

All antichrists are lairs (1 Jn. 2:22) because they deny the truth about Christ being the Messiah, being the Son of God, and coming in the flesh. All lairs will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

The specific false teaching or lie is by *"he who denies that Jesus is the Christ"* (2:22a). Many in the New Testament have made such a denial. Saul of Tarsus was one before his conversion. The Jews who crucified Jesus were of this same attitude. The exact specifics of this denial is not known. Perhaps they were denying His deity, being the Messiah of prophecy, His sinlessness, His miracles, His death,

burial, and resurrection, his Lordship, and atoning blood, His second coming, etc.

The antichrists' denial of the Son is equal to the denial of the Father. *"He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son"* (2:22b). No one can have God and not have the Son. (John 14:6). Jesus had clearly stated *"I and my Father are one"* (John 10:30). Jesus also said, *"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him"* (Mt. 11:27).

No one can therefore claim to have faith in God the Father while denying Christ. The converse is true, *"he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also"* (2:23b).

John immediately connects the false teachers holding this confession to be *"the spirit of the Antichrist,"* Although most translations capitalize "Antichrist," as if the term refers exclusively single individual. Some hold that these false teachers are not really the antichrists but forerunners of the real one coming in the "end times." However John clarifies when and where these antichrist are: *"which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world"* (4:3b). Those who are antichrist in this context is anyone against Jesus being the Christ who came in the flesh from God. Today, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witness, and Muslims represent the spirit of this antichrist.

The final reference to the antichrist is found in 2 John 7: *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist"* John informs his readers that they are many, missionary, have a message about their disbelief in the incarnation of Christ, attempt to mislead or deceive others through this lie. These are against the true Christ.

Protection from the Antichrist

John is warning Christians of his day of the current danger posed by those who were Antichrists. Today, many have gone out into this world and present just as much a danger to the children of God as they did in the first century. How shall Christians protect themselves from the Antichrists?

The early Christians had a defense against the Antichrist. John said, *"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things"* (1 Jn. 2:20). This anointing helped them to know the truth and taught them and abided in the truth (1 Jn. 2:21,27). This is referring to the miraculous gift which enabled early Christians to discern the *"spirits"* (1 Cor. 12:10). We have the ability to test the spirits (1 Jn. 4:1) by comparing them to the revealed Word of God through His apostles and prophets.

Another protection afforded to all Christians was to abide in the teachings of Christ (1 Jn. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9). Abiding in Christ meant keeping His commandments and being faithful to His teaching (1 Jn. 2:24). By abiding in Him *"we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming"* (1 Jn. 2:28).

Summary

The Antichrist is not one individual, but many. The Antichrist is not yet to come, but many Antichrists have been at work for centuries. All Antichrists are liars (1 Jn. 2:22) because they deny the truth about Christ being the Messiah, being the Son of God and coming in the flesh. All liars will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

The term "antichrist" is only found five times in the New Testament. Still, myriads of articles, sermons, Bible studies and books focus on this subject as if it were the most important religious topic in the world. In contrast, the term baptism is found dozens and dozens of times yet few are willing to ponder its vast importance to their souls now and for eternity. Stop fretting and focusing on the Antichrist and make sure you have truly obeyed Christ's command to be baptized for your salvation. Jesus promised *"He that believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16).

Questions:

1. List who all has been identified by some as "the Antichrist".

2. Explain why antichrist is not someone who claims to be the Christ?
3. Who do most think the "*man of sin*" or "*son of perdition*" is (2 Thess. 2;2-4)?
4. Explain why the "*son of perdition*" is not the antichrist.
5. How many times is "antichrist" and its plural found in the New Testament? List the passages where it is found.
6. Is the term "antichrist" used in the book of Revelation? Who is the only New Testament writer who uses the term?
7. "Antichrist" is a compound word. What does it mean?
8. True False The term "antichrist" would be inclusive of anyone who is against or opposed to Christ.
9. According the Bible how many Antichrist are there?
10. What are the characteristics or beleifs or actions of these antichrists?
11. What are some of the false teachings of the antichrists?
12. When will or did the Antichrist come?

13. Is the appearance of the antichrist a sign of Christ's return? Explain.

14. How is a Christian to protect themselves from the antichrist?

Application & Discussion:

1. Can a twenty-first century Christian be an antichrist?

2. Why is the premillennial view of the antichrist dangerous?

Homework: Protect yourself from the many antichrists who have gone out into this 21st century world.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Calling Men “Reverend”

Having only been preaching the Gospel for a couple of years I opened a letter in my office one day addressed to “Reverend Daniel R. Vess.” This is a title I never use for myself and often discourage being referenced by this religious title. Being addressed as “Reverend” did not give me a sense of pride. However, I felt a bit humbled when the man who sent it addressed himself as so-and-so “The Most Holy Reverend.”

Preachers are often called “Reverend.” Most members of the church of the New Testament refuse to address any man with this title. No preacher of the Gospel was ever refer to such in the Bible. This title has been given to ministers of denominations. Members are often taught to address their preachers as “Reverend.” Untaught Christians will begin speaking the language of denominationalism out of ignorance. These need to be taught.

Once while serving as a member of a committee at a local high school the vice principal kept referring to me as “Reverend Vess.” After the meeting I spoke with her and asked her if she would mind just calling me “Dan.” Her response: “I only mean to show respect. I am have a doctorate in education and even you refer to me as Doctor.” At this point I explained this was a matter of religious conviction and would like to be called “Dan” despite what was considered proper etiquette in addressing others. She said, “okay, but I will address you from now on by your first name, but you must call be by my first name.”



The use of the title “Reverend” was used of deans, bishops, and archbishops in 1485. It was used as a form of courteous address. The origin the title Reverend only goes back to 1449 among the Catholics. Professor Burton S. Easton, of the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church, contends that “the Catholic practice began in Ireland and subsequently spread to America” (Vergilius Ferm, An Encyclopedia of Religion, New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945, p. 661). Protestant denominations did not start to use the term until the mid-1600s. In time among the Catholics and the Protestants began to use it as a recognition of religious rank. It was not very long before prefixes were attached to the title: “Most,” “Most Holy,” “Right,” and “Very” Reverend. These were attached to further distinguish ranks among religious leaders. Today, “Reverend” is given to a person who has met with the requirements of a denomination to become a trained minister or any other ordained position in the hierarchy of a church.

The use of the title “Reverend” is not merely a matter of personal preference or an argument over semantics. It is a subject of eternal importance. There are several reasons why it is unscriptural for use the term “Reverend” in reference to a preacher or any man. First, *only God is to be revered*. The only time the term is used in the King James translation is once in the Psalms. Referring to God it says, “*Holy and reverend is His name*” (Ps. 111:9b, KJV). The Hebrew word translated “*reverend*” is *yare*, from the root *yr’*. The term signifies “terror, to be afraid of, to be awed by, to honor, worship,” etc. It could be translated: awesome, mighty or terrible. In this passage it is not a proper noun, but an adjective in reference to how awesome and mighty God’s name is. Reverence is the response all men must have at the name of God. This attitude and high respect only should be used in reference to God.

It can be argued that certain relationships would allow for an attitude of respect or reverence shown by children to their parents (Lev. 19:3; Hebrews 12:9); by a wife for her husband (Ephesians 5:33); by a subject for their king (2 Samuel 9:6). In addition, Old Testament saints were commanded to reverence

the holy things of God, such as, the tabernacle (Lev. 19:30; 26:2). No where is their evidence from the scriptures that a man should wear or be addressed with the title "Reverend."

The use of "Holy" as a sub-title in "Most Holy Reverend" is equally disrespectful of God. The Hebrew word *qadowsh* rendered "*holy*" means sacred. It can reference a saint or person separated spiritually unto God. God alone is only worthy of being called "Most Holy Reverend."

Second, no where in the New Testament is there any authority for the wearing of religious titles of rank and honor to distinguish one saint from another. The first century church had many apostles and prophets and preachers and teachers and prophets of note. Yet, not one of them accepted and wore a religious title. Paul was never called "The Very Reverend Paul," James was ever called "Very Reverend James," Peter was ever called "Pope Peter," Titus was ever called "Reverend Titus," and Luke was never referred to as "The Right Reverend, Dr. Luke." Peter simply referred to the apostle Paul as "*our beloved brother Paul*" (2 Pet. 3:15). It is true that in the New Testament there were some who were "apostles," "prophets," evangelists," "deacons," and "pastors" or "elders" (Eph. 4:11). However, these were never used as titles to distinguish rank or to keep laity separated from clergy.

Not only is there no scriptural authority to use religious titles of rank and distinction in the Bible, the use of such titles are expressly condemned. Jesus said to the Pharisees who loved to be honored with such titles, "*ut all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*" (Matthew 23:5-12). So call no man on earth "Pope" it is the Latin for "father" and God alone is our Father. Call no man "Reverend" for God's name alone is to received reverence, worship, and honor. Of course, Jesus does not condemn the calling on one's earthly parent "father." He is condemning the religious leaders who love to magnify themselves to positions of prestige, all the while requiring others to praise and honor them with religious titles. Job said, "*let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; Nor let me flatter any man. For I do not know how to flatter, Else my Maker would soon take me away*" (Job 32:21-22).

The third reason why it is unscriptural to use title "Reverend" for mere men is it promotes the unbiblical Clergy/Laity system. The body of believers in certain denominations are divided into those who are "ordained" by the church authorities as "clergy" to perform certain acts of worship and teaching while the rest of those members of the denomination are referred to as "laity." These clerics have the privilege alone to perform baptisms, marriages, administer the Lord's Supper, etc. In the Catholic church these would be the priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, the Pope, etc. In the Presbyterian church an ordained Reverend would have to have gone to an approved seminary and accepted the creeds of the denomination before being recognized as a cleric apart from an ordinary member of the laity. The Wesleyan Methodists require their reverends to complete a four-year program at one of their seminaries, be a member of their denomination, support their creed, and pass an examination by their hierarchy before ordination. Only then can they be addressed as "Reverend."

Not all men who work as ministers of denomination either take the titles or accepted ordination from their denomination's leadership. The famous Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century in England, Charles Spurgeon, did not believe the practice to be scriptural and would not have his service to God validated by the denomination. God's blessing alone was all that he needed to do his work of preaching and teaching to the souls of men. No human authority could add to this blessing. Anglican author Michael Green in *Called to Serve* wrote, "One cannot help feeling that the whole gamut of ecclesiastical courtesy titles ...are a hindrance rather than a help to the work of the ministry. They build an invisible wall between their bearer and the world at large; much more important, they tend to make him just a little proud, just a little pleased with himself. just a little further removed than he was before from the role of the Servant."

It does not take another man or man-made religious organization to authorize any other member of the Lord's church to do the work of serving God as evangelists, teachers, elders, deacons, leaders in worship, etc. True, Titus was commanded by Paul to "*ordain*" elders in every city in Crete (Tit. 1:5, KJV).

The idea was for him to use the Holy Spirit given qualifications to see to it that qualified men were appointed in every church to serve as elders/pastors/ overseers. Paul told the elders of Ephesus that the Holy Spirit has made them overseers (Acts 20:28). All saints of the Lord's church are priests serving in the holy and royal priesthood of our High Priest, Jesus Christ the Son of God (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

The idea that the authority for any man to serve comes from following the creeds and rules of mere men is not only foreign to the church described in the New Testament, it attempts to replace the authority of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures as the real source of authority. When Jesus was approached by the Jews He was asked, *"Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You this authority?"* (Luke 20:2). They wanted to know if He was authorized by God or men. No man or organization has the authority to authorize any other man to do what God alone has the right and power to do.

Calling a man "Reverend" promotes the false doctrine of ordained clergy by the authority of men and is not of God. It requires a man to give loyalty to the creeds and rules of a man-made denomination and not the Word of God alone. Today, titles are used to unscripturally separate religious people into the fallacious man-made doctrine of clergy/laity. It is a wise and knowledgeable student of God's Word who learns how to use Bible terms in scriptural ways.

The fourth reason why it is unscriptural to use the title "Reverend" to address mere men is all brethren are equal before the Cross of Christ. Wearing religious titles exalts one brother above another (Matt. 23:6-8). Jesus has condemned the use of pompous titles by which Christian men exalt themselves above their fellows. R.C.H. Lenski, a Lutheran scholar, noted: "Any title that is contrary to [the] equality of brethren in Christ Jesus, even the desire for such a title and honor, is wicked usurpation as far as our one real Teacher is concerned" (Commentary on Matthew, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943, p. 899). James, chapter two, verses 1 through 9, very clearly rebukes the showing of respect of persons. The child of God should never seek to elevate himself above others, but to serve them.

The descriptive names given to leaders of the Lord's church denote service they performed for God and others unlike the use of honorary titles, such as, "Reverend." The terms used to identify God's Servants in the Bible are much like the terms used to describe those working in service industries today. A man is a plumber because he plumbs. Another man is a builder because he builds. These terms explain what a man does and are not mere honorary titles. "Plumber Bob" is not an honorary designation, but a description of the service Bob will perform. So it is in the New Testament. A preacher (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11) preaches (2 Tim. 4:2). An evangelist (Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5) evangelizes. Overseers (Acts 20:28, sometimes translated ("bishops")) oversee a local congregation. "Pastors" (Eph. 4:11) tend or shepherd a flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). These are merely descriptive designations explaining what a man does. They are in no way honorary religious titles used to exalt one member of the Lord's church over another. Sometimes the biblical designations are misused as an honorary religious title, such as, "Pastor Smith," "Preacher Jones," "Elder Robertson," "Brother Williams," etc. These are merely substituting one honorary title for the use of "Reverend." Although these designations can still be made of a person, if they are used to merely identify the role or function of Smith, Jones, Robertson or Williams. The term "brother," refers to a relationship sustained by all Christians. One should call all the male saints "brother" instead of just using it to reference the preacher. In contrast the title "Reverend," unlike elder, bishop, deacon, preacher, teacher, does not describe the work of a person does in God's kingdom but is purely a title of elevation. Like the difference between calling a man "Plumber Bob" versus "His Royal Highness, Bob."

Once the mother of James and John, disciples of Jesus, came to the Christ and requested they have the seats to the left and right of Him when He established His kingdom. When the other ten disciples heard this they were angry. *"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many'"* (Matthew 20:25-27). True disciples of Christ do not seek after positions and titles but seek to serve the Lord and others.

C. H. Spurgeon understood this well when he wrote, "there are a great many reverend, very reverend, and right reverend sinners in the world. For myself I desire to be known henceforth simply as

a servant of God, and I want my walk and conversation to prove that I am His servant indeed. If I the servant of God, am to be esteemed in any measure by my fellow-Christians, it shall not be because in front of my name, an attribute stolen from God has been placed by an ordaining council, neither shall it be because my collar is buttoned at the back, or my coat is clerical in cut, but only for my work's sake".

Finally, many religious titles are worn out of pride. Today, there are many like the Scribes and Pharisees of the Jesus' day who loved the chief seats of the synagogue and to be called "Rabbi." They loved to be recognized by men with titles and places of honor. Masonry has always shown a propensity for flattering titles: "Worshipful Master." The predominant title of a Grand Master is "Most Worshipful." Likewise, the term "reverend" implies one is worthy of worship and honor.

No one but God is worthy of worship. When Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world He *"said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve'"* (Matt. 4:10). When Cornelius attempted to worship Peter, he *"lifted him up, saying, 'Stand up; I myself am also a man'"* (Acts 10:26). At Lystra Paul and Barnabas would not accept worship by men. *"but when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them"* (Acts 14:14-18).

All those who serve in God's Kingdom need to develop the humble attitude of Paul when he wrote, *"to me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"* (Eph. 3:8). He also warned, *"brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other"* (1 Cor. 4:6). Out of a feeling of self-importance and superiority will some accept the title "Reverend." New Testament Christians will gladly serve without such recognition.

If the early disciples, including the apostles of Jesus, refused to be honored with titles, why should saints of today accept its use? Why would any man be so brazen as to accept a term used for worship and honor? These men and women who wear the title "Reverend" and those who refer to them as such are robbing God of His glory by giving it to sinners.

In fact, the term "reverend" can be translated "terrible" or "awesome." Perhaps, if we started referring to those who love titles as "Terrible Smith" or "Awesome Jones," the use of "Reverend" would be abandoned. Furthermore, the greatest name to wear by any New Testament saint is not "Reverend" but "Christian." Are you a Christian?

Questions:

1. How do the denominations use the term "Reverend"?
2. Why is God alone to be "reverenced"?
3. Why should "most holy" not be used in reference to mere men?

4. List all the scriptures where men are called "Reverend" in the Bible.
5. While is it wrong to call a mere man "Pope"?
6. Why do some men allow themselves to be called "Reverend"?
7. How does the use of "Reverend" promote a Clergy/Laity system? What is wrong with such a system?
8. How can a man be scripturally ordained today as an "elder" or a "preacher"?
9. What "titles" does the New Testamnet use for God's servants in the church? Are these honorary titles? Explain.
10. Do some use the term "brother" be used as a honorary title today?
11. True False True disciples of Christ do not seek after positions and titles but seek to serve the Lord and others.

Application & Discussion:

1. Is it a sin to refer to a mere man a "Reverend" or a mere man to accept such a title? Explain.
2. What should you do with someone was introduced as "Reverend so and so" and everyone called them "Reverend"? What should a New Testament preacher or pastor do if someone kept referring to or introducing him as "Reverend"?

Homework: Be careful never to bestow any religious honorary titles upon men.

What Does the Bible Say About...

Apostles Today

Did you ever want to meet a real life apostle? An announcement on a church website read: “In July of 2015, Pastor Brown was ordained as Chief Apostle in the Pentecostal faith.” Catholicism maintains that Peter was the supreme bishop, even over the other apostles, and that every pope since Peter is an apostolic successor to Peter. The Catholic Encyclopedia’s article on Apostolic Succession claims: “Now the Roman Pontiffs come immediately after, occupy the position, and perform the functions of St. Peter; they are, therefore, his successors.” The Mormon Church goes even further, claiming that they have twelve apostles. “Twelve men with this high calling constitute an administrative council in the work of the ministry. When a vacancy occurred with the death of Judas Iscariot, Matthias was divinely appointed to that special office as a member of the council (Acts 1:15–26). Today twelve men with this same divine calling and ordination constitute the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (<https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/apostle>).



Are there bone fide apostles today? What does the Bible teach concerning the existence of apostles in denominations?

In order to answer these questions we first must define what is an apostle, identify their qualifications, understand the work Christ commissioned them to do, and discover the duration of their office.

The Definition of an Apostle

The word “apostle” comes from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means “one sent from or forth, a messenger, delegate” (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 99; Thayer, 1901, p. 68). It can refer to an individual who is sent by other humans to accomplish a particular mission or task. This would be using the term “apostle” in a general sense. Barnabas was an “apostle” in the sense that he accompanied Paul on an evangelistic trip. Luke wrote, “*but when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out*” (Acts 14:14). Jesus is even said to be our “Apostle” in the sense He was sent to atone for our sins (Heb. 3:1). When Jesus sent out the seventy (Luke 9:1) the verb for apostle (*apostellen*) was used for the term “sent” as they went before Jesus to prepare for the Kingdom of God (Luke 10:3).

The word “apostle” is often used in an more official sense limited to a few special qualified men in the New Testament. The term “apostle” can refer to individuals who were officially and divinely selected to serve as Jesus’ original representatives “*ambassadors*” (2 Cor. 5:20). Jesus handpicked the original twelve apostles (Matt. 10:1-5; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-2). Jesus “*chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor*” (Luke 6:13a-16). After Judas hung himself his successor, Mathias, was selected by divine decree (Acts 1:16-26). Only one other apostle in the official sense is alluded to in the New Testament was Paul. He was one “*born out of due season*” as the apostles to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 2:8; Eph. 3:8). In the official sense only fourteen men were Apostles even though many can be considered, as noted above, apostles in the general sense. However, not all Christians are apostles. Paul asked the church at Corinth the rhetorical question: “Are

all apostles?" (1 Cor. 12:29). The obvious answer is "no".

The Qualifications of an Apostle

In order to be one of the fourteen Apostles listed in the last paragraph, these men had to meet certain qualifications. First, they had to be an **Eyewitness of the Resurrection of Christ** (Acts 1:22; 22:14; 1 Cor. 9:1). When the replacement apostle for Judas was sought Peter said, *"one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection"* (Acts 1:22). To be one of the Apostles a man had to be **Chosen By God**. Paul often began one of his letters by identifying himself as: *"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God..."* (1 Cor. 1:1; cf. 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:1 and 2 Tim. 1:1). An Apostle had to be specifically **Appointed by Jesus Christ** or the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:5; Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:26; 9:15; 22:14-15,21; 26:16).

Additionally, Jesus made it clear on the night in which He was betrayed that all those who were to continue as Apostles had to receive the **Baptism of the Holy Spirit**.

- **John 14:26** - *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*
- **John 15:26** - *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.*
- **John 16:13** - *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*

This was fulfilled when the twelve receive the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

A true Apostle in the New Testament was **Given Miraculous Powers** and could perform miracles and speak in tongues, prophecy, etc. The Apostles were able to heal instantly the sick, restore those who were lame, and even resurrect the dead (Acts 3:1-9; 9:36-42). Paul told the church at Corinth that the *"signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds"* (2 Cor. 12:11-12).

Finally, a genuine Apostle of our Lord not only had the ability to perform great signs and wonders, but could lay their hand upon others and **Impart Spiritual Gifts**. Simon recognized this about Peter and John when they were sent to Samaria. *"Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit'"* (Acts 8:18-19).

The Work of an Apostle

Not only did actual Apostles have to meet specific qualifications, they also were assigned specific responsibilities. Jesus committed the **Establishment of the Kingdom or Church** into the hands of the Apostles. *"He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things'"* (Luke 24:46-48). This was accomplished by them on the Day of Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Acts 2). The Apostles were appointed to **Teach the Truth**. Most of the New Testament was written by the Apostles (1 Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:3-4; 1 Th. 5:27; 2 Th. 2:15; 3:14; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:12-21; 3:15-16). The Apostle informed the church at Jerusalem of this primary duty given to them. *"Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word'"* (Acts 6:2,4). **Confirming the Word With Miracles** was another responsibility of the Apostle. After Jesus' ascension it is said *"they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs"* (Mark 16:20). As part of their work for the Lord in spreading the Gospel, they had to also **Endure Persecution**. Jesus prophesied, *"when they deliver you up [arrest, DRV], do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you"* (Matthew

10:19-20).

An apostle is one who is sent on behalf of another. In a general sense many have been sent. Even Jesus sent out the Seventy two by two. However, there are those who are Apostles in a more limited, specific sense. An Apostle had to be one who was a witness of the resurrected Christ, called by God, appointed by Jesus, baptized with the Holy Spirit, given miraculous powers, and able to impart the gifts of the Holy Spirit to others by laying on of hands. They were given specific tasks required of in the function of their office, such as, teach the truth, establish the Kingdom on Pentecost and beyond, confirm their teaching by miraculous signs and wonders, and endure persecution. However, how long would this specific office of an Apostle endure?

The Duration of an Apostle

Since an Apostle had to be a witness of the resurrected Christ, and since Paul was the last to witness the resurrected Savior, he is the final qualified Apostle of Christ. Paul referred to himself as *"last of all"* the apostles in conjunction with his eyewitness account of the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor. 15:8). Unless someone can find a two thousand year old witness to the resurrection of Christ, the Apostles ceased to exist with the death of the last Apostle, perhaps John.

The prophets and Apostles of the New Testament church make up its foundation. Was Paul wrong concerning the church *"having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone"* (Eph. 2:20)? The first part of any building will be the foundation. The foundation is built upon the teachings of the Apostles or *"apostles' doctrine"* (Acts 2:42). Along with the prophets the Apostles' teaching has been written down in twenty-seven different books which comprise the New Testament. Therefore the church is called the *"New Testament Church."* Since the foundation upon which the church is built has been laid, there is no need for the Apostles.

The New Testament has been completed. It has been once and for all time delivered to the saints. Jude wrote, *"beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3). They had confirmed the Word by their miraculous powers. Therefore, these gifts are not longer needed. And the work of the Apostles has been completed. We now have the complete or perfect Word of God. (1 Cor. 13:8ff). Simply put there is not longer a need for the Apostle and there is no one who is qualified to be an Apostle.

No Apostles Today

What about those who make a claim to be an Apostle? John warned, *"beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). Later he congratulated the church at Ephesus *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars"* (Rev. 2:2).

No one has the credentials of an apostle. No person living today can meet the qualifications given in Scripture for being an Apostle. There are not living eyewitnesses or the ministry or the resurrection of the Christ. Paul asked several rhetorical questions: *"Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?"* (1 Cor. 9:1). No one man alive has been appointed by Christ to represent Him in the work of an Apostle (Mark 3:14; John 15:16; Luke 6:13). To replace Judas Matthias was divinely selected by lot and *"he was numbered with the eleven apostles"* (Acts 1:26; cf. Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33). God told Ananias concerning Paul *"the God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard"* (Acts 22:14-15).

In the twelfth chapter of 2 Corinthians Paul defends his apostleship. He says, *"truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds"* (2 Cor. 12:12). Today, no one possesses these required powers of an apostle. Therefore, there are no Apostles today.

According to Acts 8:18 an Apostle had the ability to impart gifts of the Holy Spirit to other Christians by laying their hands upon them. This is not being done today because there are no Apostles.

The Catholic church claims the succession of apostolic authority through the popes going all the way back to Peter. Yet Christ nor His Apostles ever had need of successors or representatives on earth beyond the average Christian with a New Testament. Paul did not pick either Timothy and Titus to take his place as an Apostle. He did tell Timothy, *"the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"* (2 Tim. 2:2).

Those who claim to be Apostles among the various denominations are liars and false teachers. The claims of Catholicism, Mormonism, and some pentecostal groups are bogus. Paul warned, *"but even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Gal. 1:8).

The original men appointed by Christ in the New Testament were sufficient. They are the only ones He needed to *"sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Matt. 19:28) and *"sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Luke 22:30). Heaven has no need of anymore Apostles *"now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"* (Rev. 21:14). They rule over the Kingdom in the sense that their words in the New Testament guide the church into obedience to Christ.

At the close of the first century the last living Apostle was likely John. When he died the Apostles of Jesus Christ cease to live upon the earth. If you really want to be influenced and guided by the Apostles today, just pick up a copy of the New Testament read, study and obey. Become a part of the New Testament church they helped to establish on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) which was built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets. Finally, go to Heaven where their names are recorded on its foundation (Rev. 21:14).

Questions:

1. Which denominations teach there are apostles today?
2. What is the definition of an apostle?
3. Does the New Testament use the term "apostle" in a generic as well as a specific way? Explain.
4. According to the Bible how many apostles of Jesus were there?
5. *"Are all apostles?"* (1 Cor. 12:29).
6. List the qualifications of an apostle?

7. Which is the above qualifications can a Christians possibly have today?
8. What was the work given to the apostles?
9. Which of these duties are unique to the apostles?
10. How long would this specific office of an Apostle of Jesus endure on earth?
11. Why don't we need apostles today?
12. What about those who make a claim to be an Apostle?

Application & Discussion:

1. In what sense do we have apostles today?
2. In Acts 8 Simon the sorcerer was trying to purchase the role of an apostle. How did Peter respond do this?

Homework: Instead of looking to men claiming to be apostles of Jesus look to remaining steadfast to the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).