



HONORING
THE
TRUE GOD



W.E. BEST

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Honoring The True God

Biblical Christianity alone honors God. Present-day religion cannot be compared with Biblical Christianity. The greater percentage of what is heard from the pulpit, on the radio, and seen on television is nothing more than religious humanism, poor showmanship, and fleshly excitement. Christianity and man-made religion are as distinct as truth and error. Every person regenerated by the Spirit of God is made willing to have his opinion contradicted and his hope frustrated by the truth of God. He learns what human wisdom cannot teach and human pride will never stoop to embrace. Conversely, religionists are blinded by the doctrines and commandments of men.

New emphasis on God's absolute sovereignty, the foundation of all Biblical theology, is a necessity. God is sovereign in the realms of creation, providence, and salvation. He not only created, but controls, everything He has brought into existence. Since God will be all or nothing, there can be no other god. A rediscovery of God's sovereignty cannot occur apart from the Biblical revelation of God.

The god of human religion resembles the supreme Sovereign of Scripture no more than the dim flickering of a candle compares with the radiant light of the noonday sun. Scripture proves that the false gods manufactured by religionists within professing Christendom do not differ from the gods of wood and stone worshipped by the heathen outside of professing Christendom.

A common expression, “Let God be God,” is frequently repeated in the religious community. How can man, who is without the power of God, let God be God? Christ said to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11). How can man who lives and moves in God let God be God? Acts 17:28 states, “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” How can the effect let the cause be the cause of the effect? The Creator alone is worthy of glory, honor, and power: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

The eternally sovereign God has a purpose (Eph. 3:11). Behind all the events of history, His eternal purpose is being worked out in providence—predestination in execution. The proof of God’s purpose is learned from the nature and perfections of God. God is omniscient—nothing takes Him by surprise; omnipotent—no one thwarts His purpose; omnipresent—no one slips up on Him; and unchangeable—no modifications are in His mind. If anything is either by chance or the mere effect of second causes, one cannot truthfully say, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36).

God’s eternal purpose includes the work of the Divine Trinity in man’s salvation. The one God consists in three Persons. There is an exclusive unity in this Trinity, because it is a fellowship of equals. Thus, the eternal purpose of grace is unilateral:

1. God the Father chose a certain number to be saved (Eph. 1:4). Election is eternal, secret until conversion, free, particular, and definite (John 6; 10; 17). Before the cross, the elect were in Christ by election and foreordination (Rom. 8:29,30; II Tim. 1:9).

2. God the Son purchased salvation for His sheep at Calvary (John 10:11,15,16). At the cross, the elect were in Christ by redemption and propitiation (Rom. 3:24-26; Eph. 1:7-12). Jesus Christ did not purchase a possible salvation for all mankind without exception, but a certain salvation for His sheep (John 10:15).

3. God the Holy Spirit regenerates all whom the Father elected and the Son redeemed (John 3:8). Subsequent to the cross, all the elect will be in Christ by regeneration and reconciliation before Christ comes to establish His kingdom (II Pet. 3:9, 15).

The covenant of grace is unilateral; therefore, a fourth party could not have a place in that covenant between equals. God cannot stoop to make a covenant with sinners on a dunghill. Sinners have no part in their salvation from the guilt and penalty of sin. The glory of God's salvation of sinners cannot be shared with those He saves. If man could take credit for his salvation, his deliverance would not be by grace.

Divine attributes have been discarded by most professing Christians to the junk heap of dry and uninteresting subjects. The only attributes preferred are those from which people assume that personal benefits are derived. Hence, God's love, mercy, and

grace are esteemed above His holiness, justice, and wrath. The majority think that love is God's chief attribute. However, the truth is that Jesus Christ died in order that the demands of holiness and love might be met. At Calvary, holiness retained its beauty thus enabling love to meet its objects. Mercy desired to save the elect, but justice had to be satisfied before mercy could operate. Here is where love stepped in and provided a Substitute who satisfied justice. Mercy could never exert power in opposition to justice. No human philosophy could ever conceive such a plan of salvation for fallen men. The eternal covenant of grace alone exalts and honors God. Man's God-dishonoring philosophy is described in the words of the Psalmist: "...thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself..." (Ps. 50:21).

God Is Dishonored By The Following Man-Made Doctrines

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: The Bible contains the word of God.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: The Bible is the word of God; therefore, any person who supposes that parts of the Bible are from God and parts from men has a more serious problem than his intellect. He has heart trouble. All the debate today over the inerrancy of Scripture manifests the heart trouble of religionists. Neither God nor Scripture is debatable.

Inspiration tells us how the Bible came to us, and revelation describes the Scriptures as the unveiling of what God wants us to know. Inspiration signifies that every Hebrew and Greek word recorded by men chosen to give us the Scriptures was God-breathed (II Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:16). This makes the Bible different from all other books.

Beware of religionists who claim to have “a word from the Lord” as though they have a “direct line to God”! They may be classified with those who believe in “continuous revelation.” They do not know the difference between “their breathing” and “God who breathed once-for-all” (II Tim. 3:16; Jude 3). Men today speak “from” rather than “by” inspiration.

God's sheep know the difference between "God's breath" and the "breath of false teachers" (John 10:3-5). They are like people who have ears for music without knowing a note. "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12).

Since the Bible is the word of God, it is the perfect rule for faith and practice. The attributes of Scripture are described in Psalm 19:7-11. Scripture will completely equip the man of God for every good work (II Tim. 3:17). This could not be true if parts of the Bible were from God and parts from men.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: God has done all he can, and now man is responsible to choose his own destiny.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: God not only planned and prepared salvation for the elect, but He also applies it to them in time. Those who assume that God has done all He can and now man must determine his own destiny have a deistic concept of God regarding salvation. Indifference or helplessness by God subsequent to His preparation of salvation at Calvary would be deism regarding salvation's application.

The passive voice, which signifies that recipients do not participate in the new birth, is used in references to man's being born of God (John 1:13; 3:3, 6, 8; I John 5:1). Men by nature are passive to spiritual things, and God is no spectator waiting to see who in the arena of physical life will decide to choose eternal life thus changing their destinies. A frequently repeated statement, "God could do nothing for me until I let Him," is blasphemous.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: Jesus Christ had the capacity to sin, but He did not. Temptations were not real to Christ if He could not have sinned.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: The impeccable (incapable of sinning) human nature was united to the absolutely holy Divine nature in the one Person, Jesus Christ the Lord. The opinion that Christ could have sinned as to His human nature but not as to His Divine nature forces the conclusion that there was a conflict between His two natures. While no descendant of Adam is beyond the capability of temptation because of inward depravity, Jesus Christ had no inward depravity with which to struggle. Christ's incapacity for sin resulted from the truth that the "I" of His human nature was the Divine *Logos* (John 1:1, 14).

Depraved men have devised "a savior" out of their own minds with whom they can relate in their depravity. They are so full of religious iniquity that they maintain that Christ's human nature was as fallen and rebellious as their own. Persons who embrace the view that Jesus Christ could have sinned do not understand either His virgin birth or hypos-tatic union. Hence, the problem is subjective rather than objective.

No one who accepts the truth of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary can at the same time insist on the doctrine of peccability (capability of sinning). If so, he would advocate that the Holy Spirit produced an unholy thing, which would be contrary to Scripture (Luke 1:35). God protected Christ's human nature from the depravity of Joseph by the miraculous conception and

the depravity of Mary by the same Holy Spirit's work in her womb.

The problem with many over the noun "temptation" or the verb "tempted" is solved by understanding that they are not always used in the sense of "temptation" or "tempted." They are also used in the sense of "trial" or "tried." A careful study of James 1:2-15 will show that Christ was never "tempted." He had to deal only with that which came from without. Unlike sinners, Christ had no internal weakness; therefore, He could not be lured, enticed, or tempted. He affirmed His own impeccability: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?..." (John 8:46). His use of the noun "sin," rather than the verb "sinned," proves that sin had never entered His holy nature.

The conclusion of this brief statement on Christ's impeccability is most important. If Jesus Christ was peccable, He would have been incompetent to stand in the place of the elect for whom He died. To say that Christ needed a savior is blasphemous.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: The Holy Spirit assists in the new birth.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: The Holy Spirit quickens (makes alive) the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5-10). Regeneration is God's giving the sinner spiritual life that enables him to do what he must, but cannot because of his bondage to sin. He must repent and believe; but repentance and faith are evidences, and not the cause, of the new birth. Although the sinner is involved in the new birth, he does not participate in it. Becoming a child of God without regeneration is as impossible as being a child

of the human family without generation. The preacher who commands people to come forward to be regenerated assumes the prerogative of the Holy Spirit.

The word of God does not have unrestricted success. In the parable of the sower, “the word of the kingdom” had no effect on the unprepared soil (Matt. 13:18-23). Only a fractional part of the sown “seed” yields any increase. The problem is not with the seed but with the soil. What is viewed by man as failure is not failure with God. God did not predestinate that all men subjected to the word of God profit thereby. Christ spoke not from the viewpoint of the covenant of grace but of human responsibility.

The Holy Spirit’s indwelling sustains the regenerated person in his Christian life. The indwelling Spirit is the Divine unction by whom every Christian is able to understand the word of God and grow in grace. However, His indwelling does not guarantee His infilling every Christian. Christians are Divinely commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Since this imperative is in the present tense (a continuous state of being filled), it is not a once-for-all experience.

The believer does not go in reverse order from Jesus Christ to the Holy Spirit; but in the power of the Spirit, he goes to Christ. The Holy Spirit’s office work is to lead one filled with the Spirit to speak of Christ. Individuals who magnify the Spirit to the neglect of the Son of God, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells, are not filled with the Spirit.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: The sinner has a free will by which he may either choose salvation or frustrate God's purpose.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: The man-made doctrine of free will robs the sovereign God of being the Initiator of the new birth. Religionists say that God has no power over the will of man; therefore, He cannot save an individual against his will. If free will means that the absolute determination of man's salvation is placed in his own hands, the sinner is like God in the sense that he is a first cause. This would indicate that there are as many gods as there are free wills.

Sacred Scripture does not record any limitation of God's will. Distinction must be made between God's "will of purpose" and His "will of command." This does not indicate two wills, but two aspects of God's will. God's will may be compared to a giant globe with two hemispheres. Man can see and understand the hemisphere but not the sphere.

There are two hemispheres of spiritual things. One is secret, and the other is revealed: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). God has revealed all He wants us to know, but what we can know is but an infinitesimal part of God's infinite wisdom. Man has always quarreled with God about secret things because he associates secrecy with selfishness. But nature itself proves that in the Divine administration, secrecy and benevolence coexist. God has not revealed the secret of germination, but He gives the revelation of the harvests. We

must not be blinded by the secret and forget God's generous blessings.

God does not introduce a conditional covenant without first making Himself known in grace to make His commandments attractive to His own. Everything unknown to believers must not be classified as "secret." This would destroy the Biblical teaching of growth in knowledge (II Pet. 3:18).

God's will of purpose is always accomplished: "...who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). "...For who hath resisted his will?" (Rom. 9:19). On the other hand, what person will say that he has always done God's will? The unfaithfulness of men to the revealed aspect of God's will can never render the faithfulness of God ineffectual concerning the secret aspect. God's will is that which is beyond the will of man to control. It goes before all others.

The concept that God can do nothing for man until man is willing to let Him makes God less than man. Those who embrace the theory of man's free will deny depravity, believe man's will precedes God's will in salvation, advocate that man's will is as free as God's will, oppose the Biblical doctrine of election, and make their wills the foundation in their salvation and their passport to heaven.

Free agency must be distinguished from free will. A free agent has the power to will and to act as his depraved will dictates, but free will assumes an ability in the will itself to choose good or evil. Since fallen man must be drawn to Jesus Christ, he has no free will to do spiritual things: "No man can come to

me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). Furthermore, because the soul of the sinner is passive to spiritual things, he has no free will to determine his own destiny.

Man is not regenerated because he wills to be saved, but he wills to be saved because he is regenerated. Whosoever will may come, but no one apart from grace wills to come. Coming presupposes the new birth. Have you heard anyone pray, “I thank thee God that you waited until it pleased me to come to you”? The will to come to Christ is not of man: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom. 9:16).

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: Faith is counted as righteousness before God.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: Faith is not the cause of justification before God. Nothing in the sinner could be a condition of his vindication before God. If human faith were a requisite to justification before God, the sinner would possess a subjective quality that satisfies God. There is no more value in human faith to justify than in animal blood to redeem. Faith is the regenerated person’s experience of having been justified on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ having been placed on his account. Many interpret Romans 4:3, 5, and 9 as being Abraham’s first act of faith (“...his faith is counted for righteousness”—v. 5). However, these verses refer to his “life of faith.” Faith does not precede grace; it originates in grace (Acts 18:27; Eph. 2:8).

Abraham's first act of faith was to leave his country, Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 12:1-5). "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed..." (Heb. 11:8). Since the quotation of Abraham's faith in Romans 4 is taken from Genesis 15:6, rather than Genesis 12:1 (the Divine commentary being Hebrews 11:8), Paul was speaking of Abraham's "life of faith," not his justification before God. Further proof is that Genesis 15:6 is quoted also in Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23. The same inflected form of the Greek verb is used in all three places. Paul spoke of justification by faith without works, and years later James used the same terminology to speak of justification by works. Conclusively, Abraham's whole life from the time of his call was lived in faith. This indicates that the aorist active indicative Greek verb for "believed" is used constatively. This views the act as having occurred but also emphasizes the action as a whole—the life of faith.

Justification is not merely the declaration of Christ's righteousness having been placed to one's account; it must be realized in the elect by faith (Rom. 5:1). Justification before God is objective, but its realization is subjective. One cannot deny that Abraham's faith is in view, but he can deny that his faith was the foundation of his justification before God.

Faith-righteousness can make no contribution to the righteousness of God provided in the death of Christ that justified the elect before God. This means that faith-righteousness (the life of faith) can do nothing to aid in justification before God subsequent to imputed (placed to one's account) and imparted

(bestowed within one) righteousness. Hence, the justified sinner can do nothing to help obtain what he already has in Jesus Christ. The Bible is clear on justification before God: “..by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:18).

The faith that vindicates the justified before God on the basis of imputed righteousness is the God-given faith that rests in the righteousness of Christ. Although faith-righteousness directs one to Christ’s righteousness, it is not Christ’s righteousness. Saying that Abraham’s faith is “counted as righteousness” makes as much sense as saying that the faith that directs one to Jesus Christ is “counted as Christ.” Is there any wonder that religionists make a god of “their faith”? God’s word states the truth on this subject: (1) Justification before God is on the principle of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. (2) Justification before one’s consciousness is by faith, which is the fruit of imparted righteousness. (3) Justification before men is on the basis of imparted righteousness.

Since faith is a part of the new creation in Jesus Christ, it cannot be the cause. Faith cannot be the cause of itself. We are not regenerated by faith, but we are saved through faith. Saving faith is a disposition of man’s spiritual nature by which he can become assured that Jesus Christ of Scripture is his Savior. When the truth of Christ reaches the consciousness of a regenerated person, he says, “I believe.” His believing is not historical, temporary, vain, or based on miracles.

The regenerated one possesses the “spirit of faith” (II Cor. 4:13). That faith is a power that enables him to act when called by means of the truth concerning Jesus Christ’s Person and Work (I Cor. 2:1-5). He who has this “spirit of faith” holds Scripture as the truth of God, takes refuge in Jesus Christ, and is assured of salvation (Luke 8:15; John 6:37; II Tim. 1:12).

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: Baptism is essential to salvation.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: Baptism is the first act of obedience by a believer who gives his testimony to what God has done for and to him. Blood always precedes water in the Biblical order. Disciples are made before they are baptized (John 4:1). Baptism is a proclaiming, not a procuring ordinance. The old covenant had ordinances of Divine service, but those ordinances could neither take away sin nor make the one who did the service perfect pertaining to his conscience (Heb. 9:1-14; 10:1-4). The ordinances of the Old Testament were given to point to Jesus Christ and His work on behalf of His sheep. The ordinances of the New Testament were not designed to take away sin but to point back to the finished work of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:5-18).

Those who believe in baptismal regeneration are forced to adopt the theory of “two mediators,” Jesus Christ and the person who administers the ordinance of baptism. But there is only one Mediator: “For there is...one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). No human person can stand between the one true God, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and those the Father elected, the Son redeemed, and the Holy Spirit regenerates.

Although Christ is the one Mediator, He is the Son by nature and not by mediation. The suggestion that “imperfect man” must stand between the sovereign God and man’s salvation is heretical. Salvation is of God, and baptism is the believer’s “answer” of a good conscience toward God (I Pet. 3:21).

The proper subject for baptism is the individual who has been made dead to sin by imparted righteousness (Rom. 6:3-6). Thus, he is not only dead to sin but also has been made alive in Jesus Christ.

No child of God opposes baptism as “essential” to obedience and membership in a local church, but he does deny that it is essential for his quickening by the Spirit in regeneration. While maintaining the refutation against baptismal regeneration, the redeemed must not neglect the necessity of baptism as a Christian duty.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: People can be saved by proxy.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: The incarnate Christ alone can act as the Substitute for the sinner in his salvation. I Peter 3:18 states, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God...”

A large segment of professing Christendom teaches that one person can act as a substitute for another in the salvation of sinners. Roman Catholics teach baptismal regeneration, and their baptizing children also includes stillborn babies. Mormons devised a doctrine called “baptism for the dead.” Reformers

were not too far removed from Roman Catholicism in their view of baptism.

Roman Catholic theology has fixed the number of sacraments (outward signs instituted to give grace) on the basis of their view that they constitute a series of supernatural acts that infuse supernatural grace into all of life from beginning to end. Among their seven sacraments, Baptism and Penance are called sacraments of the dead. Baptism is for sins committed before baptism, and Penance is for sins committed following baptism. The other five sacraments—Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction—are called the sacraments of the living. Their purpose is to give more grace.

Scripture teaches that regeneration is a prerequisite to baptism. Christ's death did not create the possibility of grace; it is the historical revelation of that grace. Thus, in Christ's substitutionary death at Calvary lies the reality of salvation toward which the God-given faith is directed and of which baptism is the Divine symbol. The reality must not be placed in the symbol. Baptism is not added to the death of Christ as a co-cause of salvation. The ordinance of baptism is meaningful only when it is related to the principle of life. Therefore, baptism does not compete with regeneration which is accomplished by the sovereign Spirit (John 3:8).

Mormonism is a religion that had its beginning in 1830 by Joseph Smith. One of its chief doctrines is "baptism for the dead." Its so-called proof text is I Corinthians 15:29—"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?"

Why are they then baptized for the dead?" There have been many interpretations of this verse; but in the light of the context, there is no problem.

The subject of I Corinthians 15 is the resurrection of the body. Paul used the word "dead" (*nekros*) fourteen times to refer to the physical resurrection of dead bodies. Since it refers to the resurrection of the body in all the other references, it is proper to say verse 29 has the same meaning. This verse teaches that Christians are giving their testimonies in being "baptized for [*huper*, 'in behalf of,' not for or instead of] the dead," signifying that the deceased saints did not die in vain for their faith in Christ and His promise of the resurrection. Paul was not speaking of a human invention but of the ordinance of baptism, which portrays the resurrection of the body. The resurrection of the body is the consummation of the salvation of the elect. Christians are witnesses by baptism of the resurrection of Christ and all who have died in Him.

Scripture definitely teaches that regeneration is a prerequisite to baptism, and it also specifies that sins must be dealt with before and not subsequent to death (John 8:24; Luke 16:19-31).

The Reformers made a serious mistake in their interpretation of what they call "The Family Covenant." Their doctrine cannot be described adequately as "symbolic." In the Reformed view, the sacraments are not simply illustrations but "signs and seals" of God's promise. Covenant Pedobaptists claim that parents who neglect to "baptize" their children sin against their souls. They believe parents can act for them, thus securing for their children the

benefits of the covenants into which they vicariously enter. Some people ludicrously talk about God's sovereignty, Divine election, and salvation by grace. Then from the other side of their mouths, they say parents can act vicariously for their children.

Pedobaptists are on the horns of a dilemma. They must alter the definition of baptism to make it signify something less than personal union with Christ, or they will be driven to teach infant salvation or presumptive regeneration. If presumptive regeneration is received as truth, would it not be correct to assume that all drunkards' children are presumptive drunkards?

Pedobaptists claim that since infant baptism is not condemned in the Bible, they have an argument from silence. Refraining from a practice on which the Bible is silent is not incorrect; but building a positive precept on Biblical silence is to build on mere subjectivism, and that is wrong. Without one's subjective thoughts being based on objective facts, he creates a philosophy which denies that Scripture provides the norm for belief and action. Thus, man is severed from any objective supernatural support, and theology is turned into anthropology.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: The faithful on earth can relieve the sufferings of souls in purgatory.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: There is no Scripture for purgatory, a place where believers suffer for a time before they enter into heaven. That would mean the righteous would carry their sins with them into eternity. Conversely, Scripture states, "...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith

the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).

Sins must be dealt with before death and not subsequent to it. Jesus Christ’s one act at Calvary not only settled the sin question for the elect but also continually cleanses them until their perfection in eternity (Heb. 10:10-14; I John 1:7). Christ’s death for sin secures the position of Christians. Nothing can be added to their completion in Christ (Col. 2:9).

Three Biblical truths must be understood for stability in the Christian life: (1) The blood of Jesus Christ is the unconditional foundation for positional cleansing before God (Heb. 10:14). (2) Confession is the condition for practical cleansing in the Christian life (I John 1:9). (3) Christ’s advocacy is the assurance for the cleansing of sanctification (I John 2:1,2).

All whom God foreordained to salvation will be glorified (Rom. 8:28-34). The foreordained, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified are equal in number. God never starts something that He is incapable of bringing to its foreordained conclusion (Phil. 1:6).

Since the sin question for the elect was settled at Calvary, there is no suffering for them after death. The only suffering for sins in the lives of Christians is while they are living. God chastens His own; but the chastening is before death, not after death (Heb. 12:5-11).

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: The Christian life is incomplete apart from the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

BIBLICAL TRUTH: “Baptism in the Spirit” refers to what took place historically at Pentecost.

Charismatic Pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit) emphasizes the “experience” of the Holy Spirit, but neglects the “doctrine.” Subjective “experience” must never be given precedence over objective truth. Erroneous doctrinal understanding of the Holy Spirit leads to erroneous experiences.

No doubt there is a lack of spiritual power in the contemporary “church,” but the teaching and practice by Charismatics does not exemplify the Biblical description of spiritual power. Many sincerely think they are experiencing the power of the Spirit; but how can they be sure, if they neglect doctrinal teaching on the whole counsel of God?

There are seven references to persons being baptized “in the Holy Spirit”—Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; I Corinthians 12:13. The Greek preposition *en* is used in the locative case in all except Mark 1:8, but there the locative case of the Holy Spirit determines the preposition to be used. The locative case makes the verse read “in the Holy Spirit” rather than “with the Holy Spirit,” which would be the instrumental case.

The first five references to baptism in the Spirit point to Pentecost. Jesus Christ was the Baptizer, and He has baptized in the Holy Spirit the assembly that He is building. All the references contain future tense verbs except John 1:33, which has a futuristic present participle. The verb “baptized” in reference to water (Acts 1:5a) is an aorist active indicative verb (point action past time), which makes that part of the

verse history. However, the verb for “baptized,” in reference to the Spirit (Acts 1:5b), is future passive indicative. The passive voice means the subjects will be acted upon rather than participating in the action. Hence, the “promise of the Father” in Acts 1:4 was an unconditional promise. The fulfillment of the predicted Pentecost was as sure as the fulfillment of Passover. Calvary was for all who were elected unto salvation, and Pentecost was for all who would constitute the body of Christ. The promise was not only unconditional, but it was inclusive, passive, indicative, and future.

After the Gentiles had experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15,16), Peter remembered what Christ had said in His promise recorded in Acts 1:5. Thus, the same inflected form of the verb is used in Acts 11:16, which makes it point back to Pentecost.

The last verse that speaks of baptism in the Spirit is I Corinthians 12:13. The controversy over this verse arises from prejudice rather than Biblical investigation. Like Acts 11:16, it points back to Pentecost.

Every regenerated person has been baptized in the Spirit, but not when he was born of God or when he was baptized in water as an ordinance. The tense of the verb “baptized” is aorist passive indicative, signifying that Paul spoke of the reality of a past action in which the recipients did not participate. Our baptism in the Spirit at Pentecost (the fulfillment of the predicted “feast of Pentecost” of Leviticus 23:15-22) is understood in the same sense as our crucifixion in Jesus Christ at Calvary. We were not crucified in Christ when we were regenerated but when He was

crucified: “knowing this, that our old self was crucified [same verb tense as I Cor. 12:13—aorist passive indicative] with Him ...” (Rom. 6:6 NASB). Both I Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 6:6 are to be understood legally rather than literally. Therefore, the reality of both Calvary and Pentecost was not dependent on the disciples’ obedience to God’s command any more than Christ’s second advent depends on our obedience to Him.

The one Pentecost had three parts, and they are portrayed in Leviticus 23:22—(1) “ye,” (2) “corners of thy field,” and (3) “gleaning of thy harvest.” The Holy Spirit came upon the Jews (Acts 2) [corresponding with “ye”], the Samaritans (Acts 8) [corresponding with the “corners of thy field”], and the Gentiles (Acts 10) [corresponding with the “gleaning of thy harvest”]. This truth is further established in the three divisions of Acts 1:8—Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.

The conclusion of what has been given on the baptism in the Holy Spirit can be stated concisely. Persons made alive by the Holy Spirit subsequent to Pentecost are introduced into the already baptized body of Jesus Christ. If Charismatics are correct, the promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:4-5 would have been in the subjunctive mood (the mood of possibility), rather than the future indicative mood (the mood of future reality). Therefore, Pentecost was not a possibility but a reality. Pentecost merely describes the Holy Spirit’s coming to baptize the assembly in power.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: Physical healing is in the atonement; therefore, sin and sickness have passed from the Christian to Calvary.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: The question of “physical healing,” like “the baptism in the Spirit,” must be answered by the correct interpretation of its foundational principle. It is true that every spiritual deliverance comes from the redemptive work of Jesus Christ at Calvary. However, we must not forget that this work not only covers our present deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin but also assures us of the future kingdom of Christ. Hence, we must conclude that the full blessings of Calvary are not yet realized and will not be until it can be said, “It is done” (Rev. 21:6). If we were now enjoying the full blessings of accomplished redemption, we would be in the perfected kingdom. Present-day conditions do not correspond with the conditions of the coming kingdom.

Christ’s redemptive work is absolutely perfect and complete Godward, but its complete application to the elect has not been accomplished. The righteousness of God (the fruit of Christ’s redemptive work) has been applied by the Holy Spirit to the souls He has regenerated, but the redemption of our bodies awaits the resurrection. Therefore, Christians are groaning within themselves, “waiting eagerly [present middle participle] for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23 NASB). Although our bodies are mortal and subject to death, we have responsibilities regarding them (Rom. 12:1; I Cor. 9:27).

Christians are neither regenerated nor glorified gradually. Both are instantaneous. The Bible teaches that when redemption is applied to souls or bodies, it

is complete and forever. The Charismatics reach the unavoidable conclusion that the salvation of one's soul is like the healing of his body, either of which he can have today and lose tomorrow.

God did not promise to save His people from but through sickness and death (II Cor. 4:16-18; Ps. 23:4). If sickness is a part of the curse that has been removed through the atonement, why are the curses of pain in childbearing, creation, and death not also removed? If healing of disease is in the atonement, as Charismatics claim, God must disapprove of the use of means other than that furnished by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Charismatics manifest inconsistency by talking about "faith healing" and "hospitals." Their inconsistency must be for the purpose of fleeing people in both areas.

MAN-MADE DOCTRINE: There is no eschatological kingdom.

BIBLICAL TRUTH: Neither the prophets nor the apostles spiritualized away the final culmination of human history into pure subjectivity. A literal prophecy spiritualized is exegetical fraud. It makes as much sense to spiritualize Christ's first advent as His second advent. Amillennialism is a taunting dream, whereas a future kingdom with the Son of Man on the throne is an energizing hope which purifies the elect (Luke 1:32; I John 3:2,3).

The thoughts of God about the future are what we call prophecy. Therefore, when we study prophecy, we are studying the purpose of God. No one can study prophecy without returning to the beginning. This is the case in the study of Revelation, which is referred

to as “the prophecy” four times in the epilogue (Rev. 22:6-21). God’s first thoughts are also His last, because He Himself is the first and the last.

Since God is carrying out His purpose according to His unchanging will, when we come to the conclusion to which “the prophecy” brings us, we are caused once again to contemplate the beginning. Hence, the beginning is now seen from the ending, as the ending was viewed from the beginning.

Prophetic time is controversial among men. Those who deny a future kingdom say that certain words which are used in prophetic passages indicate that “near” does not mean “distant,” “quickly” does not mean “ages hence,” and “at hand” does not signify “afar.” They believe these terms are to be used in their obvious meaning. This may sound good to natural reasoning, but surely the student of Scripture is cognizant that prophetic time is reserved by God as specially pertaining to Himself. Therefore, any reference to prophetic time, as to either its beginning or ending, will be according to God’s own estimate of time. The answer is recorded in II Peter 3:8—”But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

Revelation is clearly stated to be prophecy of things that are to be solemnly declared in the local assemblies (Rev. 22:16). Beware of those who give it any other classification! Christ’s last words to the assemblies prove that the consummation of God’s purpose is His personal coming to occupy the throne of His father David. In His Divine capacity, Jesus Christ as the Son of God is reigning as the sovereign Lord,

but this reigning must not be confused with the reign of promise as the “Son of David,” the “Son of Man.” Christ’s reigning as the “Son of Man” is confined to the covenanted visible manifestation of the “Son of David” who is also the Son of God.

The “all power...in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18) given to Jesus Christ after His resurrection and glorification does not negate His open exercise of that power in the future and His visible bringing of all things into subjection. As the Son of Man, He shall reign in a form adapted to humanity. As the morning Star, Christ shall shine forth not through others but in His own personal effulgence.

The future kingdom of the Son of Man is the hope of the saints: “Looking [present middle participle of *prosdechomai*, which means ‘to be looking for with great expectation’] for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). As to the future, the eye of faith must look to the second advent of Christ for the complete realization of salvation. Christ’s first advent brought saving grace, but the second advent will consummate salvation. The first advent brought the earnest of the elect’s redemption, but the second will complete it in glory (Rom. 8:23). Although believers have been “...translated [aorist active indicative of *methistemi*, which means ‘to transfer’] into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13) judicially, they shall inherit the kingdom for which they have been preserved (I Cor. 15:50; II Tim. 4:18).

Conclusion

The supreme mission of the assembly of Jesus Christ is to glorify God, but this may be done only as she earnestly contends “for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Persons who surrender any truth the Scripture reveals are guilty of a breach of allegiance to God. This once-for-all objective faith must be defended in every generation and preserved for the next. Sad to say, but we are living in a time when the Bible means no more to most “church members” than the work of Shakespeare to an infant.

Many “church members” make light of “divisive Biblical doctrines.” They call men of God who study and declare “the whole counsel of God” hair-splitters. Is any object more worthy of mental application than the glory of the eternal God? While scientists are applauded for scientific research that improves man’s physical life, men of God are criticized for Biblical research to improve man’s spiritual life. This makes no sense to Christians because they have been given a nature that cries, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Ps. 119:97), and “...I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart” (Ps. 119:69).

The “institutional church” today believes in becoming all things to all people in order that she might increase her numbers and enrich her coffers. Hence, her members build a theater for entertainment instead of a house of worship. What did Christ do to those who made His Father’s house a house of merchandise (John 2:13-17)? Is there any wonder that

Jesus Christ did not commit (imperfect active verb for “entrust”) Himself to them (John 2:24)? He knew their trust was not genuine.

God’s truth needs no man-made gimmicks to trick the sheep for whom Christ died; it needs only to be declared. Beware of “churches” and “preachers” who are always trying to come up with a new scheme to deceive the unwary! They have been brainwashed by denominations to believe that “bigger is better.” This is Neo-Pythagoreanism. The Pythagoreans equated reality with success. Hence, the “modern-day church” boldly says, “Reach people regardless of the method.”

The assembly must be separated from the world in order to minister to it. Religionists presume to teach Christ His duty. They desire to win the approval of the world. Hence, when executing natural ambitions, religionists use the words of the Jews: “...shew thyself to the world” (John 7:4). Christ told them the world could not hate them because they were of it (John 7:7). Christians understand why modern-day religion and the world get along so well together.

The assembly is on a hunting expedition for Christ’s sheep. Her message, which must be indiscriminately proclaimed, is made discriminate in its application by the Spirit.

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