

September, 2005

Pause Ponder Profit

The Bible Is Our Standard

by James A. Brown

Jeremiah the prophet wrote, "*O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*" (Jer. 10:23) Even though it is not possible for man to direct his steps, man has surely tried to become his own guide and standard. We see this in the denominational world where they have cast aside the Bible as a standard by which their teachings and practices must conform. They claim the Bible is an outdated book that fits a particular part of history but has no real relevance to man today. But my friends, there is either a divine standard that is to guide us or every man becomes a guide to himself. For those of us who believe the Bible to be the infallible word of God, then the Bible is our standard.

The Bible claims to contain God's righteousness and those who do the righteousness of God are righteous (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Jn. 3:7). The Bible contends that "the faith" has been revealed and confirmed as the complete and final will of God (Jude 3; Heb. 2:3-4). Furthermore, those who alter its teaching in any form

whatsoever has a curse pronounced on them (Gal. 1:8-9). Either we believe the Bible or we do not believe it. Either we obey all the gospel and are righteous as it teaches or we disobey and are unrighteous.

It is very obvious that many are dissatisfied with the Bible as their guide and standard. They have taken upon themselves to write many creeds, manuals, confessions of faith, and catechisms to supplement what God has said. But my friends, if these things are permissible and / or needed, the Bible is not their all-sufficient guide and standard. Again, we see that man simply becomes a guide to himself. Every denomination devises its own plan of salvation, sets its own standards, decides for itself what to condemn and what to condone. They never consult the Bible because it has been cast aside in order to satisfy the majority. The denomination simply becomes a law unto itself.

If you are caught up in the denominational system that has rejected and continues to reject the divine standard — the Bible, what should you do? The answer is simple, forsake the commandments, teachings, traditions, and assumptions of man and obey God. My friends be confident that God has "thoroughly equipped" us by "*All Scripture ... given by inspiration*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Let us not "*think beyond what is written*" (1 Cor. 4:6). Let us cling to our Bibles — "*Buy the truth, and do not sell it*" (Prov. 23:23).

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We Must Understand The Lesson Of The Seed

by W. R. Jones

When a seed of corn is planted it never produces anything but corn, and we might add, always the same type of corn. In the spiritual sense the "seed" is the word of God. (Luke 8:11) **"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."** When this gospel, the "seed," is planted in the hearts of men and women it will never produce anything except what can be found in the New Testament. If a person is something religiously, that we can not read in the New Testament, it means that something has been planted in his heart in addition to the "seed," the word of God. If you take some of the New Testament and mix it with the "Baptist Manual" then plant it in the heart of a man, it will produce a Baptist. If some of the New Testament, plus the "Methodist Discipline," is planted in a person's heart you will have a Methodist. This is also true of others. The mixing of any "human doctrine" with the gospel of Christ causes it to be a "perverted gospel" which is not pleasing in the sight of God. Paul wrote to the Galatians, *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."* (Galatians 1:6-8) Obviously, this makes it a matter about which we should be seriously concerned.

However, the real point to be remembered is this; the New Testament alone will produce neither a Baptist nor a Methodist. This should be very obvious, because neither is mentioned in the word of God. When a person has the "seed," the word of God, and that alone, planted in his heart,

he will be nothing more nor less than just a Christian. (Acts 11:26) *"And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."* (1 Peter 4:16) *"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."*

He will be a member of the church of Christ also called the church of God. (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2) He will not "join" anything, but he will be "added to the church." (Acts 2:47) Surely we can understand that the Lord will not "add" one to anything except the church which "he purchased with his blood" and over which he is "head." (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23) The Lord does not "add" men to denominations, because they are unknown to the New Testament. It was 15 centuries after the church of Christ was established before any denominations came into existence.

I am told that there are over three hundred different religions or churches in the United States. Of course, we can only read of **ONE** in the New Testament. (Ephesians 4:4) *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;"* This "one body" is the church. (Colossians 1:18) *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."* This means that all these churches, except the Lord's church, have been planted or established by men. They are, therefore, "human organizations" We would do well to remember the following statement made by Jesus in Matthew 15:13, *"But he answered and said, every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."* If you have been produced, spiritually speaking, by any "seed" other than the New Testament, then you have not

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Baby Dedication Service From God Or Man?

by James A. Brown

A “baby dedication service”, what is it? It is where fathers and mothers are encouraged to bring their babies to the front of the church building during the worship service and the preacher will bless or have prayer for the baby presenting him/her to the Lord in dedication. At this time, the preacher may also pray for the parents and a certificate of baby dedication may also be given to them. Such a certificate purchased from a local religious book store reads, “Certificate of Baby Dedication This Certifies That _____ born _____ at _____ was duly and with prayerful concern Presented to the Lord in dedication by _____ on the _____ day of _____ year _____”.

Many churches of Christ today are engaging in this practice for which they have absolutely no scriptural authority. We read of no New Testament church in the first century ever having such a service. When a congregation engages in such they are adding something to the work and worship of the church for which they have no scriptural authority. They are adding to the word of God. God has commanded His people not to do that, “*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you*” (Deut. 4:2; cf. Rev. 22:18-19).

Churches of Christ have long condemned denominational churches for unscriptural practices. We have ask for book, chapter, and verse for every belief and practice. We have sought to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent. “*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Pet. 4:1). We have long recognized that authority is established in one of three ways: direct statement

or command, approved example, and necessary inference. But not one of these ways can be given to justify “baby dedication services”. So where does the authority for such services come from? The Bible instructs us that authority for our teaching and practice either comes from God or it comes from man (Matt. 21:23-27). Jesus said, “The baptism of John--where was it from? From heaven or from men?” Of course it was from heaven, i.e., authorized by God, but the elders and the chief priests would not admit it. So we ask, “The baby dedication service — where is it from? From heaven or men?”. If you say from heaven then please give book, chapter, and verse where God authorized it. The truth is, it is from man. Those who engage in the baby dedication service will not admit this because like the elders and chief priests they will be caught in disobedience.

For a long time, many denominational churches have practiced the unscriptural ceremonies of the christening of babies and infant baptism. They have involved themselves in such rituals because they believe in “total hereditary depravity”. This is a tenet of the doctrine of Calvinism which teaches that babies are born sinners. They believe that babies have inherited the sin of Adam. Calvinism is a false doctrine. Babies are born pure and innocent and only become sinners like the rest of us when we reach the age of accountability and choose to sin. Ezekiel said, “*the soul who sins shall die*” (Ezekiel 18:14). Babies have not sinned and so have not died spiritually. Jesus said, “*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 19:14). Sin is not hereditary but “*the transgression of the law*” (1 Jn. 3:4)

Why have some churches of Christ involved themselves in the practices of denominationalism? Well like Israel, they have rejected God’s rule in order to be like the people of the world (1 Sam.

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8:1-8). It has been true of every generation of God's people. Some simply will not respect God's ways nor His word, so there is no appeal made by them to the scriptures, but to the world round about. In doing this, Jesus condemns them, "*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*" (Matt. 15:8-9).

If the words of Jesus condemn you then flee the errors of men and come back to the truth. Jesus said, "*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (Jn. 8:32).

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been saved. You are not a Christian, and therefore, not a member of Christ's church. I would urge you to leave "error" and "human churches" and obey the truth before the "mighty up-rooting of the Lord." The judgment is coming as sure as death. "*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*" (Hebrews 9:27) Remember, at the judgment no changes can be made. I take no personal delight in differing with people, but I must respect the teachings of the New Testament. You see, dear reader, I have to face the judgment too and I must give an account of whether I have stood for the Truth. Please consider all the scriptures used in this article. (John 12:48) "*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*"



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