

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." – Ephesians 5:23

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## A PLEA FOR NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

### Part Two - Seven "Ones" of the Church

#### Number 5 - "One Faith"

by Ted J. Clarke

##### Introduction

We resume the series on the seven ones of the church with the "*one faith*" which the apostle Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:5. Just as there is "*one body*," the church; "*one Spirit*," which indwells and leads us through God's word which He has revealed; "*one hope*" of the eternal life which we desire to attain in heaven; and "*one Lord*," who is the only Risen Redeemer and Saviour; there is also only "*one faith*," which is the basis of our belief and practice.

This "faith" is more than belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, for that type of faith is encompassed in the "*one Lord*" already mentioned. While the "*one faith*" Paul requires includes such faith in Jesus as Lord, there is more to the "*one faith*" than belief of the basic gospel foundation (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

##### Different Definitions of "Faith"

The basic meaning of the Greek word (*pisteuo*), translated "faith" in our English Bibles, is that of "reliance, trust, and belief."<sup>1</sup> However, the New Testament attaches contextual meanings to the idea of trust and belief which show that the "*one faith*" is more than a mental concept of belief, for example, that Jesus is God's Son. More on this point in a moment.

Different forms of the word "faith" also mean "faithful"<sup>2</sup> or "faithfulness," "trusting."<sup>3</sup> One must have a continuing "faith" or it is of no avail (Acts 14:22; Colossians 1:23). Many of the great passages on "faith" in the NT are in the present tense in the original Greek and signify a continuing faith (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24 et al.). The only kind of "faith" which avails is a faith which "works through love" (Galatians 5:6). James 2:26 notes that "faith without works is dead" and 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"

(NKJV). Thus, the "*one faith*" of which Paul speaks cannot be "faith alone," meaning a mere mental acceptance or belief. James also says, "*Even the demons believe*" (2:19), but who would say that they are saved? One can study the meaning of the Greek word translated into English by the "faith" word group and find some interesting contrasts to present day denominational doctrines.

b. *pisteuo* as "to obey." Heb. 11 stresses that to believe is to obey, as in the OT. Paul in Rom. 1:8; 1 Th. 1:8 (cf. Rom. 15:18; 16:19) shows, too, that believing means obeying. He speaks about the obedience of faith in Rom. 1:5 [also 16:26, TJC], and cf. 10:3; 2 Cor. 9:13.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the "*one faith*" of Paul's seven ones can never be merely the idea of faith alone. To so contend would destroy the meaning he gives to "*the faith*" in his writings and elsewhere in Scripture.

##### "The Faith"

The "*one faith*" of which Paul speaks is "*the faith*" of Scripture, in contrast with the various faiths authored by the design of uninspired men.

e. The Faith. Paul can call the message itself *pistis*. As such, *pistis* is a principle, e.g., in contrast to law [that is the concept of raw law or the law of Moses, TJC] (Rom. 3:31; cf. 3:27: the law of faith). **Along these lines *pistis* is Christianity either as being a Christian or as the Christian message or teaching (cf. Gal. 6:10; 1:23). Acts 6:7 and Eph. 4:5 offer similar uses**, and cf. 1 Tim. 3:9; 4:1, 6. Orthodox doctrine is *pistis* in Jude 3, 20 and 2 Pet. 1:1. The phrases in 1 Tim. 1:2, 4; Tit. 1:1, 4; 3:5 are to the same effect.<sup>5</sup> [emphasis mine, TJC]

Earlier in the work cited, the author correctly observed, "*pistis* [faith] as Acceptance of the Message...is saving acceptance of Christ's work as proclaimed in the gospel. **This includes** believing, obeying, trusting, hoping, and being faithful, but it is primarily faith in Christ."<sup>6</sup> [emphasis mine, TJC] Faith in Christ is

the basis for obeying, hoping, and being faithful (continuing full of faith), but we do not have the "*one faith*" of which Paul speaks without continuing obedience in faith!

The gospel message ("*one faith*") contains (1) facts to be believed; (2) commands to be obeyed; (3) blessings to be enjoyed now; and (4) promises yet to be received. We are to believe the historical facts such as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). However, we do not obey facts. We obey commands. Yet, we are told that we must "*obey the gospel*." "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel*" (Romans 10:16); Jesus will come "*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8); and, "*For the time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God*" (1 Peter 4:17). So there are commands to be obeyed in faith, such as repenting and being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), continuing steadfastly in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42), worshiping God (John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:25); putting away sinful things and embracing righteous attitudes and actions (Galatians 5:16-26; 2 Peter 1:5-15; et al.) These are part and parcel of the "*one faith*" which the apostle Paul requires of the "*one body*" of Christ's church (Ephesians 4:46). There are blessings to be enjoyed as these commandments are obeyed in faith. All spiritual blessings are ours to enjoy "*in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3). These include forgiveness of sins both past and present. Past sins are forgiven as we show our faith in repenting and being baptized to obtain forgiveness (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Sins we commit as Christians are forgiven as we repent and confess them to God, praying for forgiveness (Acts 8:21-24; 1 John 1:7-10). The ability to pray to God as our Father and to be strengthened in the faith through His Spirit also come as blessings of the Christian life (cf. Ephesians 3:1-21; 6:10-18; et al.), just to mention a few. The

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**promises** yet to be received include eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7) and the joys of heaven yet to be revealed (1 Peter 1:4-5; 2 Peter 1:10-11; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5).

These are all matters of the "one faith" which are revealed in the New Testament of Christ. Jude 3 says we must "contend earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints." This faith is the "one faith," once for all delivered to the saints. There is no substitute for it. Any who add to it or detract from it do so in condemnation from God (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19).

**Faith, Gospel, and Doctrine**

There is a very popular false teaching in religion which says that "faith" in Christ is the sole factor in determining whether one is saved. It is further alleged that that "faith" is in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which is a "core teaching," and that so-called "doctrinal matters" other than those gospel facts do not affect one's salvation and should not hinder fellowship among all professed believers in Christ.

We have already shown that "**the faith**" and "**the gospel**" include more than the basic facts of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It remains to show that "the doctrine of Christ" is also part of the gospel faith. Doctrine cannot be relegated to

an inferior position, as though it is less important than and different from the "**one faith**" or gospel. The English word frequently translated "doctrine" in the NT is sometimes translated "teaching," which is indeed the proper meaning of the word. The difference is whether or not the "teaching" is divine instruction, coming from God, or if the teaching comes from no greater authority than the will of man. Jesus noted that God had said, "*In vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines [instruction] the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9; cf. Isaiah 29:13). Apparently Jesus thought that "doctrines" were very important and did make a difference on the acceptability of one's worship! While denominational preachers and liberal brethren say "doctrine" is not an issue at the "core" of whether or not one is acceptable to God, God said that worship not according to divine instruction is "*vain*."

Another passage to our point is found in Second John 9-11: "*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. (10) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; (11) for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*" While those who desire to restructure the Lord's church contend that "doctrine" in these verses refers to only the concept of Christ coming in the flesh (verse 7), general usage of the phrase "doctrine of Christ" and the context here cannot limit its meaning to verse 7.

**didache.** This word means "teaching," "instruction" as a fact... In the NT it refers to the whole *didasklein* [teaching] of Jesus in Mt. 7:28 etc., i.e., his proclaiming God's will in both form and content. This also is the meaning in Jn. 7:16-17. The same applies when the *didache* [teaching] of the Pharisees and Sadducees is at issue in Mt. 16:12, of the apostles [doctrine] in Acts 5:28, of those who taught the Roman church in 6:17; 16:17, and of Paul in 1 Cor. 14:6. **2 Jn. 9-10 follows the same pattern**, as does Revelation when speaking of the *didache* [doctrine or teaching] of Balaam, the Nicolaitans, and Jezebel in 2:14, 15, 24. <sup>7</sup> [emphasis mine, TJC]

The very context of this passage (2 John 9-11) demonstrates that the "doctrine of Christ" under consideration is not limited to verse 7, but refers to the whole of Christ's teaching, including that revealed by His apostles (cf. John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Ephesians 3:3-5; Jude

3 et al.). John wrote (2 John 1-4) about "truth" as a body of teaching, not truth limited to one point. In verse 6 he speaks that our love for Christ is that "*we walk according to His commandments.*" Notice he wrote the plural "commandments," not referring to just one. In verse 7 John gives an example of a serious false teaching which fails to keep the truth and walk in Christ's commandments, but abiding in the "*doctrine of Christ*" involves much more than this one example. Jesus made part of this same point in John 8:31-32, saying, "*If you abide in My word [the doctrine or teaching Christ gave], then you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*"

**Conclusion**

Anyone who teaches differently than Christ or His inspired apostles and prophets regarding any matter essential to the "**one faith**" (the gospel message, which is also the doctrine or teaching of Christ) is not abiding in Christ's word. Thus, that person does not have God or Christ abiding in him or her. The "**one faith**" of which Paul speaks excludes all others. Remember, where there is only one of something, you have no choice in the matter. You will either accept God's "**one faith**" or teach as your doctrine the commandments of men, which is vain worship (cf. Matthew 15:9,13).

The "**one faith**" of which Paul speaks contains the fulness of God's will for us. It covers the plan of salvation, how to worship and serve God acceptably, how to live sanctified lives and "*keep yourselves in the love of God*" (Jude 21). The "**one faith**" is comprehended in the following passage by Paul regarding God's will. "*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). If your faith varies from the "**one faith**" shown by God's will, it is not "**the faith**" which has been given once for all time, for which we should earnestly contend (cf. Jude 3). Would it concern you to discover that your faith cannot be found as the "**one faith**" of the Scriptures?

We have a **free tract** we would enjoy sending to you entitled, **Introducing...A First Century Church for All Time**. The tract suggests several essential areas for you to investigate in your Bible, as you compare the teaching of the Bible to

your own faith and church. Simply drop us a line and make your request for the free tract offer. Be sure to provide us with your return mailing address. You may contact us by regular mail, e-mail, fax, or telephone. See the box at the top of column one on page two of this issue for all the information you need to contact us in one of these ways. [to be continued]

<sup>1</sup> All references are to *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), translated and abridged by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 1985; article on "pisteuo," by R. Bultmann, 849-857.

<sup>2</sup> TDNT (Abridged), 853.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 854.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> TDNT (Abridged), article on "didasko...didache," by K.H. Rengstorff, 161-166.

## THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD

Bible Lesson Number Three

by Richard England

The Bible is from God. It did not originate in the mind of man. It is inspired, "God breathed." It makes known (that's revelation) to man things that were unknown and could not have been known through any other source. Over a period of sixteen hundred years, approximately forty men wrote what God revealed to them. All their writings combined make up the book we call "The Bible." It is an account of God's dealing with mankind.

Jesus' being raised from the dead proves that he is the Son of God. Once that is understood, there is no difficulty in seeing that what Jesus said and what his disciples wrote under his direction is dependable.

They said of the Old Testament:

**2 Peter 1:21** "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God **speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**"

Concerning the New Testament:

1. The Lord promised:

**John 14:26** "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you **all things**, and bring **all things** to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

**John 16:13** "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into **all truth**: for he shall not

*speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."*

2. The apostles received:

**2 Peter 1:3** "According as his divine power hath given unto us **all things** that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

3. They spoke:

*"...not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.... 1 Corinthians 2:1*

4. They wrote:

**Ephesians 3:3-4** "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)"

**2 Peter 1:15** "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

God did not reveal to them a thought and depend on their ability to write down and teach it as best they could by their own understanding. If that had been the case, we would have been at the mercy of their unaided memory. But, God gave them the very words. This is evidenced, in part, by the fact that they often spoke things they didn't understand (Read **Acts 2:39** and **Acts 10:34,35**).

The last inspired book to be written was the book of Revelation. Since that time, in that all the truth was in the Bible, there has been no need for further information. Through the years the book has been preserved from one generation to another accurately enough that we have no doubt but that we can know all the will of God for man today. It may well be in the wisdom of God that we do not have the original copies of the Bible writings, for some would worship the parchment and ink and not the God of heaven who revealed it. But, we do have manuscripts which date back very close to original writings. Preservation of the Bible has been quite accurate. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1946 and the few years following, they revealed no additional inspired books and no new information concerning the content of the ones already available.

The Bible is an account of God's dealing with man. It lets us know what he wants us to do; that is, it is his "Will." Not only does it teach us what to do, it gives us examples of those who obeyed and those who

disobeyed. The results of obedience and rebellion are vividly displayed.

All people should carefully, prayerfully and with a receptive mind study the Bible. If one believes the Bible to be from God, he ought to be interested in what it says and willing to abide by its teaching.

### Questions

1. What does "inspired" mean?
2. What does "revelation" mean?
3. How long did it take to complete the Bible?
4. How many men did God use to write the Bible?
5. Where did the men of the Old Testament get their information?
6. How much of the truth were the apostles to receive from the Holy Ghost?
7. Peter said they received how many things that pertain to life and godliness?
8. What was the last inspired book to be written?
9. Is our Bible accurate and dependable today?

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## ALCOHOL

by Thomas F. Eaves Sr.

*"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise"* (Proverbs 20:1).

*"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine. Those who goes in search of mixed wine"* (Proverbs 23:29-30). Alcohol inhibits one's faculties (Proverbs 23:33-34). Alcohol anesthetizes (Proverbs 23:35).

"Alcohol misuse is involved in approximately,

1. 30% of all suicides
2. 50% of all homicides
3. 68% of manslaughters
4. 52% of rapes and other sexual assaults
5. 48% of robberies
6. 62% of assaults
7. 49% of all violent crime"

(The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism quoted by *The Tennessean*, Sunday, Sept 14, 1997, p. 3F).

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Alcohol is the cause of much tragedy in our society.

In 1995 and 1996; highway fatalities hovered around 42,000 each year, reversing a trend earlier in the decade when fatalities dipped to fewer than 40,000 annually. Of these fatal crashes, alcohol was involved in slightly more than 40%, or approximately 17,000 deaths each year in 1995 and 1996. (*Sheriffs*, January-February 1998, p. 17).

Each one of these deaths affected more lives than the one killed: there were husbands, wives, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. The tragedy of death by alcohol is tremendous!

"How many alcohol-impaired driving incidents occur in the United States each year? While no one knows the accurate number, the best estimate to date is over 123 million annually, according to a study published in the January 1997 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*" (*Sheriffs*, January-February, 1998, p.17).

"Of the 5.3 million convicted adult offenders in prison, jail or on parole or probation in 1996, 36% reported they had been drinking at the time of the crime for which they were convicted, the report estimated." (*Herald-Citizen*, Cookeville, Tenn., Monday, April 6, 1998, quoting a report from the Justice Department).

**ALCOHOL IS A DRUG!** Ethyl Alcohol found in beer, wine, and whiskey is a depressant drug which dulls the inhibitions, and decreases the powers of self-evaluation and rational control.

What is the answer to this great problem?

*"Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly"* (Proverbs 23:31). Also read Habakkuk 2:15; Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21; and Ephesians 5:18. If you never take the first drink you will never become an alcoholic or an abuser of alcohol.

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#### A WORD OF EXPLANATION TO OUR READERS

We regret that after our printer sent us the proof for FCGN for the December 1998 issue and we made the necessary corrections, a young lady who works for the printer took it upon herself to add the nativity picture in column one of page four. She undoubtedly did not understand the consequences of her actions and had good intentions.

We want you to know that we do not celebrate the birthday of Christ on December 25th. We recognize that the New Testament places great significance on the virgin birth of Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21-23), but that there is no Scriptural teaching which expressly teaches or implies that we should observe December 25th as the birthday of Christ and a religious holiday. The fact is the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states, "Christmas was first known to be celebrated on December 25, in Rome in the fourth century after Christ." Therefore it cannot be a teaching of the New Testament word of God. In effect, we celebrate Christ's birth every Lord's Day (Sunday) when we remember His life and His death, burial, and resurrection in our worship to God, specifically in observance of the Lord's Supper (communion). See First Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7.

Thank you for your understanding. – Editor

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#### GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

#### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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