

# Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

Volume 12

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

April 1977

Number 76

## The Authority for Christianity

By Harold Turner

In Matthew 21:23, while Jesus was teaching in the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people asked him, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" We might be inclined to ask why these questions were asked in the first place. What difference did it make? These questions are certainly proper and in order. Jesus was teaching things that differed widely from that of these religious authorities. Since these were the recognized authorities in the teaching of God's word, and in that they had not authorized Jesus to teach these things, it was in order, not only that they question his teaching, but the authority by which he taught as well.

In our society many religious teachers consider it an insult for anyone to question the things they teach, no matter how much the teaching differs from others, or even contradicts that taught by others. What right do we have to question the teaching of others? Not only do we have the right, but we are commanded by the Lord to do just this. In 1 John 4:1, the Bible states, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This shows that not all things taught in the name of religion are true. Since there were false teachers, John warned that we should try the teaching to see if it is from God or of men.

Jesus showed the importance of our examining the things taught in religion when he said, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9) Following the doctrines designed by men hinders acceptable service to God. The apostle Paul warned Timothy that "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ." (2 Timothy 3:13-15.) He then encouraged Timothy to "Preach the word . . . For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers,

having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Timothy 4:2-4). In Galatians 1:6-9 Paul shows that some had fallen from the grace of Christ by receiving a gospel that differed from that taught by the apostles. There are numerous other warnings in the Bible, which show that following the teachings of men will corrupt one's relationship with God.

Why should any person feel it an insult for another to question the things he teaches, or the authority from which he teaches them? We should be glad when people have enough interest in matters of spiritual truth to question them. We should be honored for the opportunity to show the source of and authority for our teachings and practices. In 1 Peter 3:15 we are told, "And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." The Holy Spirit called noble those who, "Received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11).

Jesus proved to his critics that he was truly a "Teacher come from God" (John 3:2), and that his teachings were authorized by the God of heaven. In John 12:49, Jesus said, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." Jesus knew well the authority for his teachings, and the one who had authorized them. He is God's spokesman to those who choose to do God's will.

Because of the role that Jesus accomplished in our redemption, he stands as the authoritative source for all religious teachings in the church today. In Matthew 28:18, he made the claim that, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." In Ephesians 1:22 Paul said that God had exalted Jesus to be "The head over all things to the church." And in Colossians 1:18 we are told "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Therefore, Jesus is the supreme authority in all matters of spiritual importance. When one teaches and practices things that Jesus has not authorized, he is thereby denying Him the authority that God gave Him.

(Continued On Page 4)

## An Analogy

By Leslie Leonard

God's mercy -- the water of life -- is as inexhaustible as the water from Mammoth Spring in northern Arkansas. We cannot begin to exhaust the supply of God's mercy any more than we can empty that great spring with a bucket.

But the fact that Mammoth Spring has an abundant supply of water does not necessarily mean that everyone can enjoy that water. There is a drought in the western States, but the water from that great spring cannot benefit the people in that area simply because they can't get it. They are too far away and there are too many things -- such as hills and mountains -- between them and the water.

The same is true of God's mercy. There are some people who are too far away from God to benefit from His mercy. (I don't mean to imply though that they can't move closer to God.) But sin has carried them so far that they simply won't avail themselves of the abundant supply of mercy that God has provided. There are also hills and mountains of indifference, hate, rebellion, lust, etc. that separates them from His mercy.

But it is not only true that those who live far away cannot enjoy Mammoth Spring, it is possible that some of those who live near it cannot enjoy it simply because they refuse to take advantage of it. It is possible for a person to die of thirst on the hill overlooking the spring. He may see the abundant water, but if he refuses to take advantage of it, it will be of no value to him.

It is hard for us to imagine a sane person perishing in sight of a spring of water, insisting that he will not drink from the spring unless the water is brought to him, but this is the situation too often where God's mercy is extended. Some will not drink of the water of life even when it is brought to them, and some insist that God must bring it to them before they will accept it.

God has abundantly provided mercy through his Son, Jesus Christ, and like Mammoth Spring, we cannot exhaust the supply. But God's mercy will not do us any good until we respond to the invitation to "Take of the water of life freely", Rev. 22:17. In other words we have to do something for ourselves. God is not a delivery boy. We have to do

(Continued on page 2)

**The Fulton County Gospel News**

... is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name be SURE to include the Zip Code Number. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know of its financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request.

EDITORS: Erwin Cowen and Harold Turner

# The Gift of the Holy Spirit

By Glynn V. Purdy

The Bible speaks of the "Baptism" of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5); "Gifts" of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 2:4), which are listed in 1 Cor. 12:8-10; and the "Gift" of the Holy Spirit. The "Gift" (singular) is the one which we will discuss in this effort.

To begin with, let us point out that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit in any measure. Jesus said unto his disciples, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (The Comforter is said to be the Holy Spirit in John 14:26 GP), that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world can not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him..." (John 14:16-17).

The gift of the Holy Spirit is promised only to those who obey the gospel. Peter preached the gospel to the Jews assembled in Jerusalem for Pentecost (a feast no longer authorized by God), and when they believed this gospel, they asked Peter what to do about their sins. Due to the fact that they now believed in Jesus, they were told to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). So, we conclude that the three thousand who were baptized received the "Gift" of the Holy Spirit, and that the rest did not. The Lord added the saved to the church, so we conclude that the three thousand were saved and added to the church, further concluding that members of the Lord's church had, and have today, the "Gift" of the Holy Spirit. So any one who is not saved, is not a member of the Lord's church, and does not have the "Gift of the Holy Spirit" today.

The body of a Christian (one saved, a member of the Lord's church) is the temple of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Cor. 6:19 Paul wrote, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and ye are not your own?" This was written to the church of God, to those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 1:2. Those who believe, repent of their sins, confess their faith in Christ, are then baptized "Into Christ." (Rom. 6:3). This is the same as into the body of Christ, the church, Col. 1:18. If the Spirit was dwelling in the hearts of the Christians at Corinth, when did he enter if not at baptism? If this is not the promised "Gift", what is the promised "Gift"?

The disagreement often arises on whether the Holy Spirit dwells in the

heart through the word of God, or separate from the word.

The word of God obeyed, prepares the heart for the Holy Spirit to dwell within it. It has been pointed out by some one, that a man can build a house with a hammer and saw. When the house is completed, the family moves into it. They do not dwell in the house "through" the hammer and saw, neither do they dwell in the house "separate and apart" from the hammer and saw. The hammer and saw were necessary to PREPARE the house to receive the family. So is the word of God. It is the hammer and saw that is used to PREPARE the heart for the Holy Spirit to dwell in it. The Holy Spirit HIMSELF dwells in the hearts of those who have been prepared by the gospel (by obeying the gospel the heart is cleansed by the blood of Christ) to receive him. He cannot dwell in the heart that has not been prepared (cleansed and purified by obeying the gospel I Peter 1:22). The heart is prepared by obeying the gospel, then the "Gift" of the Holy Spirit is given, which is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Of course we realize that the Holy Spirit guides man today through the written word (The New Testament), which he has revealed, and never speaks directly to man, for God deals with all men today in the same way (John 14:26; 16:13; and Acts 10:34-35), through the gospel. We may never know all there is to know about "how" the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of a Christian, but the Bible says he does. We must obey God, and he will do the rest.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Individuals:

A member of the church . . . .	\$10.00
Vida Hall . . . . .	5.00
Raymond Relethford . . . . .	5.00
A. H. Sanders . . . . .	5.00
E. A. Sauser . . . . .	15.00
Anna Bell Houston . . . . .	5.00

Churches of Christ

Wheeling . . . . .	75.00
Elizabeth . . . . .	5.00
Big Pond . . . . .	10.00
Viola . . . . .	5.00
Jeff . . . . .	5.00
Agnos . . . . .	5.00
Williford . . . . .	5.00

### An Analogy (Cont.)

whatever He requires to receive the gift.

God has not promised -- or even implied -- that He will deliver His mercy to us whether we want it or not. (i.e. save us against our will.) He has conditions we must meet to receive His mercy such as the necessity of believing in Him and His Son, of repenting -- turning away from our rebellious ways -- and obeying.

In the same way that a man could sit on the hill overlooking Mammoth Spring and say, "I believe God exists and made that spring, and I believe that there is a spring down there, and I'm going to live a good life the way God wants me to live, but I'm not going down there and get any water," and die of thirst, we can die or remain spiritually dead by refusing to accept God's mercy.

We can believe that God exists and that Jesus is His Son. "The devils also believe and tremble", James 2:19. We can live good moral lives. (Some atheists put some 'saints' to shame.) But if we refuse to partake of God's mercy in the way He has required then we will perish without the water of life, although we may be conscious that it flows abundantly nearby and is available.

"If you insist on perfection, make the first demand upon yourself."

"Even if marriages are made in heaven, a man has to be responsible for their maintenance."

"Have you noticed that a lot of people criticize others for criticizing?"

"There's more than one way to skin a cat, but no matter how it's done, the cat won't like it."

"Give your brother credit for being a good man unless you know he is not."

# The Church

By Richard England

'Church' is a word with which all Bible readers are familiar. It appears in the New Testament one hundred twelve times. The same word which is translated church is also translated 'assembly' three times. The word refers to "The called out." The word does not always mean or refer to a religious group. In Acts 19, 'assembly' refers to those who had gathered to protest Paul's preaching. Stephen, speaking of the people who had been called out of Egypt, used the word church (Acts 7:30). Paul uses the term to refer to those gathered in a religious service in 1 Corinthians 14:34).

In that Jesus came to "Call . . . sinners unto repentance" (Luke 5:32), he uses the word to refer to all who believe him to be the Son of God and obey his will. Those who are "In Christ" are "The called." Notice the use of this word 'called'. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye were CALLED" Eph. 4:1. "... even as ye are CALLED in one hope of your calling" Eph. 4:4. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are CALLED in one body", Col. 3:15. "Who hath saved us, and CALLED us with an holy calling", 2 Tim. 1:9. Christians are referred to as "Partakers of the heavenly CALLING", Heb. 3:1. "Whereunto he CALLED you by our gospel", 2 Thess. 2:14.

All those who obey the gospel's call by being baptized INTO Christ are children of God by faith, Gal. 3:26-27. They have been called out of sin and into Jesus Christ. They are "The called out -- the CHURCH, for which he died (Eph. 5:25), which he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28), of which he is the head (Eph. 5:23), which is his own body (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18, 24), and which he has sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:26).

Jesus has all authority (Matt. 28:18). Only Jesus can say what one must do to get into his church - his body. When we do what he says do, to get into him, he adds us to that great body of saints, who have submitted to his will. No man on the face of the earth has the power to vote us in or out of the church of Christ. They may keep us out of human institutions, but not the divine church of God, which is mentioned in the Bible. If one is saved, he is saved by the power of God through obedience to the gospel. To say that he is saved is to say that he has been "Called out" of sin and into Christ. He is IN the church.

God has added his people together in this fashion from the day of Pentecost

# Are New Testament Customs Binding Today?

By Clovis Ragsdale

In a study of the New Testament we are introduced to a number of customs of that day. Most of these have ceased to exist with the passing of the centuries. However, some people believe that we should continue many of these, such as: footwashing, the holy kiss, and the wearing of a covering on the head of women in worship. Customs play an important part in every society, though they are not written law. One must be careful not to flounce customs to the extent of hurting our influence. Customs change and each generation must modify their thinking to the changes. When a custom violates the law of God, it ceases to be a custom and becomes a sin.

Let us consider the above mentioned customs. Footwashing was used as an act of hospitality. The method of overland travel of that time was mostly by foot, or by riding a beast of burden. Their shoes were mostly sandals. The roads and paths which they traveled were dusty. It was both an act of hospitality and expedient for a host to wash and bathe the feet of a guest, to both clean and soothe the feet. In the thirteenth chapter of John we find our Saviour using this custom to teach the apostles a lesson on humility and service, and also it was a way of teaching them of the cleansing power of Christ for the sins of mankind. Nowhere does the Bible teach the custom of footwashing as a command for all to keep.

The exhortation to greet one another with a holy kiss is in the same category. This custom may still be appropriate in some parts of the world today. The apostle Paul wrote, "Salute one another with a holy kiss." But he was not commanding them to kiss, his teaching was that the kiss be holy. He was regulating a custom to prevent its abuse from becoming a vice or sin. In our country, the handshake has become the appropriate method of greeting.

In the eleventh chapter of first Corinthians, Paul discusses the custom of the Grecian women wearing a veil in worship. It is said that respectable Grecian women did not appear in public

until now (Acts 2:47). If we do what they did, then we will become what they were. Then, we should want to continue in the same fashion of worship and work for the Lord that was characteristic of them. In this way, we can look forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ with great hope.

without being veiled. Paul used this custom also to teach Christian women their relationship to the man. To have violated this custom at that time would have been an indication that the woman was refusing her husband to be her head. Also within this teaching, Paul discussed the men having short hair, and the women having long hair. No rule was given as to the exact length of either, but a distinction was to be made. At the conclusion of this teaching Paul makes it plain that the wearing of a veil was not an ordinance or doctrine of the church, neither did the apostles issue a commandment for or against its use, except to advise its use where the custom dictated its expediency.

We must be careful not to teach outmoded customs as present day commands. To do so will create strife among brethren and can lead to division, which is sinful and which hinders the saving of souls. Neither should we flounce customs of our day, for to do so will often weaken our influence and harm the cause of Christ. In the matter of woman's dress, Paul told Timothy to teach that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety and good works. This is the way women can dress for worship and any other appearance in public today, and not run the risk of being shamed. The word modest carries the meaning of that which is appropriate. Christian women should avoid extremes.

---

"Obstacles are the terrifying things we see when we take our eyes off the goal."

"The most important business lesson is the one that teaches you what is your own, and what is none of your business."

"A man can never know what he can do until he tries to undo what he has done."

Grow angry slowly -- there is plenty of time."

"A man is also known by the company he avoids."

"As a leader in the Lord's church, don't be a driver. The Master, whose worthy example you wish to follow, did not drive men, He led them."

"True knowledge is to know how little can be known."

The Authority for Christianity (Cont.)

Generally speaking, most acknowledge Jesus as the supreme authority over all spiritual matters; however, there is a major problem as to how He relates or delegates His teachings to and for us. While some may claim that Jesus is all authority, they may also claim that Jesus has spoken to them personally and related his will; and feel it an insult for anyone to question their claim to be his spokesman.

Does Christ delegate his will directly to men today? Do we receive messages directly from Christ? While we may be encouraged not to question this, most want to know. If He does, surely the Bible would tell us.

The New Testament teaches clearly that the apostles were the chosen ambassadors for Christ. In Acts 1:2 the writer states that after Jesus returned to heaven, "He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." In John 14:26 Jesus assured the apostles that the Spirit would "Teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." In John 16:13 He promised the apostles, "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." These promises were only to the apostles.

Christ chose the apostles, revealed his complete will to them, and then guided them in writing it for all future generations. Notice the words of the apostle Paul in I Cor. 14:37, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." In Acts 20:27 he said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." The apostles received "All truth" "All the counsel of God" and they have written it ALL for us today. Since they received "All truth" how could any make the claim to receive more today? Those who preach a gospel that differs from that delivered by the apostles are to be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9). The apostle John wrote concerning the doctrine of Christ, saying, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11).

The New Testament, as we have it today, is the complete will of God. Any and every thing we need to know about His will can be learned by a study of this. Paul declared the all-sufficiency of the gospel when he wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him

Are Babies Lost At Birth?

By Ted Mountjoy

If faith is necessary to salvation, what happens to babies or little children who die before they are old enough to believe?

That faith is essential to salvation is shown in the following Scriptures: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6); "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Many other verses also teach the necessity of faith.

It is obvious that infants and little children cannot believe. But it is also obvious that a person must be LOST before he can be SAVED. He must be lost before he NEEDS salvation. We become lost, in the Bible sense, when we sin. It is the transgressing of God's laws that makes us sinners (1 John 3:4). Infants and little children are not accountable. (Neither is a mentally incompetent adult accountable.) Since they have committed no sin, and are therefore not sinners, they have no need to be saved. They are SAFE. They are not condemned.

Some have been taught that infants and little children are sinners, in that they inherit the guilt of Adam's sin. But is this true? It certainly is not true if we take the Bible as our authority. Nowhere does the Bible teach original sin or inherited sin. In fact, the Bible doesn't even mention original or inherited sin. The Scriptures teach just the opposite, that "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. (Ezekiel 18:20). In fact, Jesus says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3). In Matthew 19:14, Jesus said, concerning little children, "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." Therefore, little children are not born sinners needing to be saved, they are safe, pure, and innocent.

in good living. The Scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work." (Phillip's translation).

Because of the many conflicting teachings in today's religious world, may we learn to question, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" For God teaches us to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess. 5:21).

DRIFTING

By Lavern Stewart

Drifting is one of the easiest things in the world to do - one can just do nothing and drift. One area in which drifting is apt to appear is in the reverence manifested in the assembly. A strong effort must be made to keep our worship periods quiet and devotional; otherwise the services will drift into a state of disorder and disrespect. It is not enough for a few to make an effort toward more reverence in the assembly; but everyone must consciously strive (beginning, naturally, with himself) for more quietness, more attentiveness and more hearty worship.

Christians are told to serve God with "Reverence and awe," Heb. 12:28; however, if we are to reverence God, then we are also to reverence the things of God. Our Lord taught this respect for sacred things, Matt. 7:6, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs..." In the Jewish age, the priests were denounced because they did not make a difference between things holy and things common, Ezekiel 22:26. Further, it is said in Ecc. 3:1, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." So then there is a time to worship - let us give to each its time.

As defined by Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms, "Reverence distinctively implies a recognition of the sacredness or inviolability of the person or things which stimulates the emotions." A recognition of the sacredness of God, and of his worship plus the knowledge that God wants matters conducted quietly, and orderly during worship will help greatly in keeping us from drifting away from reverence.

"Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Cor. 14:40.

Clow's Ragsdale  
Route 3  
Marmoth Springs, Arkansas 72571