

# John The Baptist

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WHEN Malachi finished the promissory books, B. C. 397, his vision shot the great gulf between the Old and New Revelations. He had just stated that on the other side 'The Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings,' and looking 400 years in advance he saw Christ's 'messenger,' his own successor, in a young Judean prophet, and heard him uplift the cry 'Behold your God.'

Nearly 4,000 years before Malachi, a four-headed river had flowed from Eden 'to water all the ends of the earth,' and his faith now descried on the banks of the anti-typical Jordan, the Master with the messenger, two Godlike forms, each first-born, and cousins' sons.

Whom Malachi saw in a vision, Matthew met in real flesh and blood, the Baptist 'herald' and the Lord from heaven. The voice, 'Make straight his paths,' is the first sentence in Baptist history. No moral night had been so dark as that athwart which this prophet cast his eye to see the coming 'Day Star.'

Only remnants of the old Jewish faith were left, and the national life was fast going forever, with that public patriotism, free thought and outspoken manliness, which had already perished.

At first God gave the Jews the most popular government of all the nations; it treated the personal man with honor and dignity. Though they had no human king or hereditary ruler from time to time, he gave them such a political head as war or peace required, with prerogatives which met present necessity. In time the theocracy gave witness to the unity of God, and its liberties were linked to this vital truth. This theistic doctrine made Jehovah their common Father; they were uncrippled by doubtful negations, untainted with atheism, and the ideal in each man's soul clothed his fellow with the rights of a brother. The radical teaching from which all abiding liberty flows is this: 'Love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.'

During the period between the last prophet and the first evangelist, the Assyrian, Persian, and Macedonian empires, with their endless divisions and subdivisions, had culminated in the Roman Empire. This power absorbed into itself the sentiment, humanity, political economies, and religious philosophies of thousands of years, covering the histories of all the great races, Semitic and Indo-European, having welded the whole into a homogeneous mass. It had sprung from an obscure city more than seven centuries B. C., and now embraced the civilized world. The great republic had waged its renowned conflict between plebeians and patricians for constitutional government. The democratic spirit had passed away with its staunchest defender, the regal and republican forms of government having been swallowed up in the imperial under Augustus.

Palestine was but a hundred and eighty miles long, by about half that width. Yet, when John and Jesus came, the officers of Rome were everywhere, with no jurisprudence left; only appeal to a heathen emperor, under privilege. Three native kings, indeed, divided the old Hebrew patrimony: Antipas, in Galilee; Philip, in Ituria; and Lysanias, in

Abilene. Still, over these was Pilate, the sixth procurator in twenty-three years, with the Governor of Syria over him, with Tiberius above all, and each ready to enforce his mandate by the arms of the empire.

These tyrants quarreled alternately with each other, in turn issued conflicting commands, fleeced each other in particular, and the Jews universally. One Jewish party flattered and copied the native rulers, another the foreigners, and all were proud to serve as minor officers, if they might wring a crust out of official rapacity. A third party hated and defied the intruders, plotting revolt and sedition, which kept the nation in a seething excitement and its blood ever flowing.

Yet, a few men of God never yielded heart or hope. However dark the hour of adversity, their lamp was always burning. They waited for the Deliverer to break every yoke. Their fellows, worn-out, grounded arms and died, their eyes glazed with despair. But the love of Jehovah and liberty never forsook these. No matter if the red-handed family of the age held Jacob by the throat; the holy few felt the shadow of the King at the gate. If the iron had entered their soul, it was not rusted by heart-tears.

The time had come for a new manhood; a new revelation of truth and holiness was needed, fresh in righteousness and true holiness. An age of moral suasion was dawning to work a new character in the personal man. Then, from renewed individuals should come the 'kingdom of heaven' in a regenerate society. Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna felt their old hearts revive, because another Elijah was at the portal to open the golden age. Groans and strife, tears and blood, had tracked the horrid length of 100 years. At length there came a 'little child' to lead them, with a 'voice' to prepare his way; and when their withered arms pressed the reforming Baptist and his redeeming Lord to their bosoms, the first chapter in Baptist History was begun.

Edward Irving truly says, "John was the beginning of a new race. But the words of Jesus better fix his proper place in history: Amen, I say unto you, among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." These words alone make him the most remarkable character on the sacred page, save only He who spoke them.

Zacharias, his father, was a priest in Israel. Elizabeth, his mother, was a daughter of Aaron. Not only had their priestly ancestry stretched down fifteen centuries, but they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This is said of no other father and mother of our race. They feared that their honorable lineage would soon be blotted out, for they were old and childless. The words, 'Thy prayer is heard,' imply that their empty home had been the subject of petition at God's throne.

He had promised them a son, and when he would fulfill his word, it fell to the lot of John's father to pass through the golden gate into the holy place to burn incense: a high and holy privilege which never was repeated by the same priest, as it brought him so near to Jehovah. Already the live coals had been carried in a fire-pan from the altar of burnt-offering, the sweet spices sprinkled thereon, and the floating perfume was on its way to the clouds, when, lo!, a mysterious form glided into the hallowed place. Gabriel stood by the altar, bright in native benignity, at its right side, too, the side of good omen, and in the attitude of Oriental service. In a moment the temple heard the new revelation - that a son should be born in the home of the man of God.

Gabriel and Michael are the only angels called by name in the Bible. Michael is the judicial messenger, the destroyer, valiant for the Lord of Hosts in terrible warfare. The mission of Gabriel is peace, especially Messianic peace. At the evening oblation, the same hour of incense, he told Daniel that the Prince, Messiah, should come. He brought the same news to Mary, and to the father of John; the three cases ascribe to him the office of Messianic angel. No person but the priest could stand by the altar and live, and fear fell upon Zacharias when he saw that the celestial visitant and did not fall dead.

Then Gabriel broke the silence of four centuries, and opened the Baptist Age, saying: "Fear not, thy wife shall bear a son, and his name shall be called John." The venerable priest staggered through unbelief, and asked for a sign. Gabriel gave it in the very dumbness of the tongue that asked it until the child should be born. He then went forth to the people mute, beckoning, perhaps in an excited manner, but he could not pronounce the usual blessing, and

they perceived that some strange thing had happened. He retired to his home at Hebron, or Juttah, near to Hebron, and remained speechless for three fourths of a year.

The 'city Juda,' the Levitical city of Juttah, as shown by Reland and Robinson, is about six miles south of Hebron, in the hill country, seventeen miles south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem stood 2,400 feet above the sea, and Hebron was 200 feet above that. Hebron was the ancient home of Abraham, where his pool still exists, the oldest now known in the world. This city had been given to the children of Aaron, 'with the suburbs thereof round about it,' and was a fitting birthplace of the Baptist, the greatest descendant of Aaron's house. Here David received his crown, and here were the sepulchers of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. Rabbinical tradition says of this spot, that the morning sacrifice was never offered at the temple till the watchman on its tower saw these uplands ablaze with the newly-breaking morning sun.

Zacharias saw this glory despite his speechless state; meanwhile Gabriel's words rang through his soul concerning the coming child. The pledge, "He shall be great before the Lord," did not refer to his native wisdom, fidelity or influence, but royally set forth his great office; the great era which he should usher in, the great truths which he should proclaim—and, above all, the new stamp of manhood to be brought in his own person, as a specimen of those whom the new era was to produce.

Without rank, or wealth, or power, he was to loom up above the old classes of good men, mighty before God. Consecrated to a greater work than any other man, and opening a greater future than any had foreseen, he was to take a higher type of moral character than any had yet borne. Of a priestly house, he was to offer no sacrifice, but was to preach the first Sacrifice from a princely house. Priesthood needed not the fullness of the Spirit, and seldom possessed it, but in order to establish the new office of preacher, to lead men to salvation, he needed the indwelling Spirit. Nor was the first prophet in four centuries to work a miracle, but simply to proclaim the Christ.

When the cry of the new-born babe had brought music to the quiet home, a dispute arose among the neighbors about his name, some calling him Zacharias. This could not be. No one was named after his own father in the Old Testament. "Nay," said his mother, "he shall be called John," meaning: Bestowed of the Lord.' The neighbors remonstrated, none of his family were known by that name, and they made signs to his father to decide the question, who wrote upon a tablet, "His name is John."

The child was to begin the world's new sermon, and as it was meet that the Gospel theme which had been pent in his father's soul so long should break forth, the tongue of the dumb was unloosed. With his first gust of voice he cried: "O, child! Thou shalt be called prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, in order to give knowledge of salvation to his people, in the remission of their sins." It was worth the dead silence of a life-time to speak these words. Their meaning was so broad, and their music so sweet, that the old priest repeated the word salvation three times before he could stop. "A horn of salvation,"— "salvation for our enemies,"—"salvation in the remission of sins," was the astonishing threefold theme on which he practiced his new-found tongue, in the new-found language of truth.

Gabriel put a key into his hand to open this mystery, saying: "Fear not, Zacharias, many of the sons of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their Go." In the converts whom John should make? Nay, he said, that the mouth of the holy prophets of old had spoken of this redemption' as if the mystic fingers of dead Malachi were sweeping his old heart that day, till its chords vibrated as those of a harp. That child had brought the missing link between the two dispensations, had become the veritable bridge-builder, the true Christian pontiff, who spanned the arch from the last outskirts of Judaism to the frontier line of the Gospel.

What manner of child was this first Baptist?

The Gospels are silent on John's youth and early manhood, saying: "That the hand of the Lord was with him." That he "grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel." God

marked him by special tokens for his great task. While his body grew his soul became mentally and morally mighty till he was ready for his public work.

The inspired limner gives simply this bold outline which makes 'the hand of the Lord,' the power of God, the emblem of his force. Gabriel throws light upon his discipline when he imposes the Nazarite's vow, 'to drink neither wine nor strong drink.' Nothing inflaming was to pass his lips or affect his brain. The vow also exempted him from attendance at the feasts, and kept him separate until his showing unto Israel. Samson, Samuel, and John were all Nazarites from birth, severe consecration and denial of luxury being specially needful in the forerunner of him who was separate from sinners.

His father's priestly house furnished him with Hebrew Biblical knowledge, and held there under the holy influence of Elisabeth, like Moses in Midian and Elijah in the desert, no rabbin could pervert him, till he was ready to stir the life of Judea to its center, by the Gospel. He is the only man in Scripture, except his Master, of whom no act of sin is recorded. Samson and Samuel were 'sanctified,' set apart to the Lord from their birth, but neither of them was filled with the Holy Spirit, as was the Baptist; one of the train of wonders in his character and mission.

It seems most likely that he left his home and plunged into the wilderness of Judea when he had passed his twentieth year, the time at which young, priests were inspected by the Sanhedrin for their office. The deserts which he entered are supposed to be that weary region that stretches over Western Judea, bordering on the Dead Sea, including its desolate basin. It includes Engedi, extending from the Kedron twelve miles south of Jerusalem to the southwestern end of the Sea of Death, and in width, from thence to the mountains of Judea. It is not called a 'wilderness' for barrenness of vegetation, like the African sand-wastes.

On the contrary, it is a perfect tangle of growth. Lonely and wild, the broom-brush, the stunted cedar, the ocher, the rush and the Apple of Sodom, all flourish there, and nomads pasture their cattle with great profit. It is watered by the Kedron and other streams, their course lying dark and deep, in ravines and chasms, where all is grim and ribbed with rock, sometimes to the depth of 1,000 feet below the brow of the cliff.

This region abounds in gorges, crevices and caverns. It is torn by sharp precipices from the heaving of earthquakes, leaving the flint, chalk and limestone rents in every weird aspect. Rills of water gush forth, twisting their way here and there, or falling in cascades over crags and shelves, in haste to sweeten the acrid plain and sullen Sea of Salt. There, the jackal, the wolf, the fox, the panther, and the boar find their lairs and dens. From ridge to ridge, the hoarse scream of the vulture, the raven and eagle, echoes mingled with the pensive song of the thrush, and the drone of the bee, wandering from wild flower to wild flower, yellow and blue, crimson and white.

In all its grandeur, this howling wilderness was the chosen home of the first Baptist. Its solemn desolation and wild elements preached to him of God, inured his body to hardship, and turned his soul inward upon itself. The parchment which warmed in his hand stirred him to communion with the Inspiring Spirit, who had invested its sentences with immortality, and proved its truths divine by their appeal to his heart. Life had coursed through the skin on which the text glowed before the knife of slaughter flayed it; and now, the holy afflatus, which the sacred penman had infused into its texture, warmed his soul with the beatings of an immortal life. There, he listened to the still, small voice, as did Elijah in sacred Horeb, away from noise and contention, till his spirit waxed strong in God and in the power of his might.

In his austerity, this holy recluse wore the coarsest of raiment. The rough camel's hair cloth, bound to his loins by a band of undressed leather, covered his limbs. Young and full of fire, he stood, the living image of courage, in the garb of the elder prophets. His Nazarite vow had kept his hair unclipped from birth. His diet was locusts, dried, ground, and eaten with wild honey which dripped from the rock, and he cooled his thirst at the spring wherever he roamed in the freedom of the desert. His removal from the uplands of Hebron into this somber desolation was not a mere incident. He must be equipped for his iron mission, as far as hardship could fit him to cope with moral evil.

For years, he had been wrestling with the slow openings of his fore-felt work. Self-recognition had come glimpse by glimpse, till new insight had brought him into new sympathy with the Holy One who had sent him. Struggle

after struggle had wrought in him an ardent spirituality, which rebukes sin with the quietest authority. Pleading with God day and night, the depravity of his brethren, and the hollowness of their ritual were echoed to his soul from the hollow rocks by his own foot falls.

Did he pass his time amongst these grotts and caverns without studying the word of God? Without the Sacred Parchments brought from his father's house, the gold had become dim and the fine gold changed, he had not been a true Baptist if ignorant of these, to win his countrymen back to Jehovah. We can scarcely doubt that in the desert these treasures showed him how the rod of Aaron, his great ancestor, should bloom again and his empty pot of manna be refilled.

How the Nazarene, then sweating at the carpenter's bench should suddenly come to his Temple to rekindle the Shekinah in new glory over the mercy-seat. The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms in his retreat, made his heart burn with prophetic fire, for he heard the voices of old Prophets quivering in the air. As night gives brilliancy to the gem, so did his desert gloom bring out lustrous truth from the inspired lore of ages, every line that he unrolled telling a divine story; for everywhere he found his Redeeming kinsman of the tribe of Judah, of whose Salvation his father had sung.

God would not entrust the education of his greatest prophet to the skill of mortals. In visions of the night when deep sleep fell upon his father's house, fear came upon him and trembling, which made all his bones shake. An image stood before his eyes, spirits passed before his face and he heard a voice. When the breathing Parchment crackled in his hand, the pulsations of a deathless life stirred him, and the Holy Oracle was alive with living images. The flaming sword of Eden waved before him, and the ascending fire of Abel. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, told him that Jesus opened the gate of heaven, when he rose to his home without tasting death. Noah told the Baptist that the ark, wherein eight souls were saved through water, was a type of his coming Captain. That when it rocked over an immersed world in the darkness of its grave, Jesus was the lamp which hung in its window above the gloomy deep. Nay, it was he who gave hues to the first rainbow that spanned the new world, when the eight elect antediluvians pitched their tents again on dry ground, and offered sacrifice under its radiant arch.

John, also, saw Abraham's day in the desert and was glad, when the great forefather assured him that he had seen the coming King, as he looked out from the steeps of Hebron. Isaac avouched to him that he had seen his Star when he went into the fields at eventide to meditate; and Jacob declared that at Bethel he saw Jesus standing at the top of the mystic ladder, and on his pillow of stone dreamed in the night watches about the glory of the latter day. David, the son of Jesse, showed the Baptist that his great Son guided his fingers over the Messianic harp, when his throne trembled in raptures, and living anthems flew like angels from the strings. Moses told him of the Rock that followed Israel, which Rock was Christ; and Isaiah, that Jesus was the 'Stem' that blossomed by the house of Jesse on the hill-side of Bethlehem.

In a word, from the days of Eve, the mother of all living, to those of Mary, the mother of Jesus, the history of the Promised Seed was traced in the desert by the son of Elizabeth. And, yet, a few miles from his dingy retreat, the incarnate God had already been wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger.

All this fitted him for the office to which he was born, armed him with a fidelity which nothing could daunt to grapple with his adulterous generation. Without this strength defeat only awaited him. Being fully clad in celestial panoply, the word of the Lord said to him: "Go," and he arose to begin his true Baptist work. He emerged from the desert of the North, and came first upon the well-watered plain of the Jordan. His sandals then pressed the soil of Lot, on which the eye of Moses rested, when he died on Nebo. There the name of John became eternally united with the name of Jesus, the Christ.

Whenever an Oriental monarch passed through his realms, a herald went before him, proclaimed his coming, and required his subjects to make the neglected roads passable for their sovereign, by removing all hindrances to his progress. When Semiramis, the Queen of Babylon, marched into Persia, she crossed the Zarcean mountain, but not till its precipices were digged down and its hollows filled up to make her way smooth. We have similar records of Xerxes, Caligula, and Titus, and when Jesus entered upon his kingly course, John, his herald, demanded that all

obstructions, be removed before him in his march. He cried, "Prepare the way of the Lord," that all flesh may see his glory.

His progress was not to be that of pomp and pageantry, but that of a nation's repentance. Rugged and wretched as were the moral wastes, he was to make the desolation ring with the demand for repentance, summoning all to surrender to the coming Prince. The valleys must be filled. All debasing affections must be elevated; the downtrodden and the despairing must be lifted up. Mountains must be brought low. The proud and haughty were to be leveled, abased in the dust. The crooked should be made straight. All tortuous policies, winding deceits, and lying frauds of the self-righteous, should be exchanged for simplicity and transparency. The rugged ways must be made smooth. Coarse severity, rough tempers, bitter asperity, hot fanaticism, and stoical hardness must be cast aside, for gentleness and child-like affections. Then, all flesh should see the salvation of God. No lofty shadow was to fling its length before the face of God's Anointed. The Voice cried: "Prepare the way of the Lord."

When John left the howling of beasts in the desert, it was to electrify the land by the startling cry "Repent," and thenceforth, he frowned on all brutal passion. The whole nation started to its feet and flocked to him, as its center of hope. City, village, and hamlet, poured forth their hardened multitudes to see and hear the new Baptist preacher. The prophecy of Malachi had said: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." And, as the universal expectation of the Messiah was cherished by the Jews at this time, they looked for the literal accomplishment of this prediction in the return of the Tishbite, as his precursor.

The news, therefore, flew through the land that this faithful servant of God who ascended to heaven in the reign of Jehoram, had been borne back to the earth, to break the Roman Scepter, and hurl himself like a thunderbolt against all tyrants, that he might restore the glory to Israel by enthroning her new king. Every eye longed to see this somber old giant of Carmel and Horeb, and every ear listened for his strange voice. Hence, all flocked to the banks of the Jordan whence he ascended, for, said they, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, had landed him on the very spot where he laid down his mantle and burden 900 years before.

But instead of launching forth denunciation against Roman strangers, John opened an accusative ministry upon his own people. He made not his voice soft and smooth in his 'cry.' He presented a new and striking figure to them, enthusiastic, yet self-poised. Filled with deep conviction of the truth, inspired of God and consecrated to the truth, he had evidently come on no dubious errand, and his aim was worthy of his great work.

Under the pressure of a divine influence, he set his face like flint, in downright fearlessness. The scorn of every form of cunning filled his voice, holy indignation at sin flew in every syllable from his lips. His body was free from sanctimonious vestments, and his soul inflamed with zeal; he lifted up the truth, a lambent torch, for his word made dread exposures, and searched men to the core of their being.

Without the tears of Jeremiah, the sublimity of Isaiah, or the mystery of Ezekiel, he bravely struck home by rebuke and exhortation and heart-piercing censure. He dealt in no arts of insinuation, no apologies, no indulgence; but upbraided the hollow and pretentious, and shivered their pious self-conceit to atoms, while they gnashed their teeth at him. He was a living man, just sent from the living God, dealing with cardinal verities, in an original and emphatic vigor that stung the cold-hearted, and held the malignant conscience by a remorseless grip.

Wicked men saw the majestic flow of holiness in his eye. They felt its nervous vibrations in his abrupt anatomy of character, and were borne down before his impassioned demands for self-loathing. The slothful were startled in their dreams; he held up the self-blinded for their own inspection, in their true colors; he rudely tore off the masks of the false. The hard-hearted saw their guilt staring them in the face, and the reckless were haunted by the ghosts of their murdered mercies from the God of Abraham. Yet, he wielded no weapons of earthly chastisement; he mingled not the blood of sinners with the waters of the Jordan, but he pointed to the uplifted ax, as it gleamed in the terrors of the Lord, about to strike a blow and fell the withered tree.

Strangely enough, instead of repelling the multitude, his fidelity fascinated them. The Spirit of God gave power to his proclamation. This, of itself, made his holy serenity soft and saving. Consciences were aroused, hearts were broken, and the sorrows of the people for sin, re-awakened the ancient sobbings, when their fathers wept on the death of Moses. A rude and arrogant mind, having so difficult a work to do, would have been harsh in its rebukes, only exciting anger and resentment.

But John's words cut to the quick because his affectionate holiness, gravity, sincerity, and good-will made them sharp. He had been so much in retirement with God that he was imbued with his love and compassion. He carried not the mien of an ill-mannered, bold, and self-appointed censor of sin.

True, the great Baptist had brought a fire-brand out of the wilderness which set all the dry stubble in the land ablaze. But with this came confession of sin in lowly simplicity, and sincere reformation of life, which sought expression in the new faith and baptism. Instead of meeting Elijah, descending in the regal state of flame to smite the waters of their great national river and divide them, the young representative of Elijah's God stood there demanding that their buried bodies, and not his rod, should divide the waters in token of death to sin.

The alarming cry "Repent ye" rang up and down the valley of the Jordan. This demand laid bare God's extreme holiness, and their personal guilt against him. The word itself (*metanoia*) means a change of mind or purpose; so that he not only required deep sorrow, or contrition for their wickedness, but such an inward moral disposition as should thereafter obey the will of God.

Then they were to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, so that the outward expression of that disposition should prove the inward change to be radical. He made their immersion in water the exterior method of "confessing" the reality of an honest, heartfelt reform: Here, then, he required a spiritual revolution, a baptism for the "remission" or forgiveness of sins, and the implanting of a new principle of life in keeping with the kingdom of heaven at hand.

These requirements, urged with the courteous fidelity of holy conviction and the sacred simplicity of an overawing holiness, led a multitude of wounded and stricken hearts to fly from all legal rites and ceremonial performances, for purification of heart and life, after the evangelical order of Isaiah: "Wash you, make you clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.

At a stroke of the pen Matthew draws another vivid picture. Priests, Levites, and doctors in the holy city had donned their robes and bound on their phylacteries and other ecclesiastical trappings for a visit to the great river that they might pass upon John's commission. Sweeping with pomp and dignity through the gates, they mix with the throng on the slopes of the Jordan, first with a conceited curiosity, and then with a bigoted scowl.

But John's keen eye read their character, and he began to ply them with solemn invective. In the desert he had seen the slimy viper gliding through the moss; crafty, malicious, with a powerful spring and a hollow tooth through which it ejected deadly poison. He had seen the brawny forester swing the ax to cut the tap-root of a tree and fell it for converting these into blunt figures of speech, he allied his visitors with false teachers from the 'old serpent' who could not be trusted for a moment. Like the flat-headed, ash-colored reptile, they had stung the sons of God; and with bitter irony he compares them to the twisting young, ejected from their damn, to hiss, and fight her venomous battles.

Scathing them with cold sarcasm, he demands, "Brood of vipers! Have ye come to my baptism? What sent you? The ribbon on your robes is beautifully blue, the phylacteries on your brow are ostentatiously pious, but they cloak corruption. Delude not yourselves with the thought that ye are Abraham's sons. His blood may warm your veins, but ye deny his God, for your souls are dead to his faith. Behold the stones at your feet, and know that from them God is able to raise up sons to Abraham. One word from his mouth will bring from the adamant, truer Jewish hearts and softer than those that beat in you."

He then demanded that if they were sincere, they should prove this by bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance. Nor did lie change his tone with his simile; for when he dropped the lash of scorpions, he took the edge of the woodman's ax. He could not away with their sanctimonious hair-splittings and religious tamperings, but would hew them down to be cast into the fire.

But other and better classes of the people hailed his ministry with awe, as from God. So powerfully did divine truth move them, that they actually reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether he himself were not the Christ. How beautifully our Lord Jesus speaks of these, when he would know of the rulers whether John's baptism were from heaven or of men: "Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye did not believe him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

These Rabbis were in the habit of saying that if the nation would repent but one day, the Messiah would come, yet, when he came, they themselves were obdurate. And, when publicans, soldiers and others, who were openly sunk in sin, came to the Baptist, convicted of their iniquity, it was with the saving inquiry upon their lips, "Teacher, what shall we do?" They seemed to look upon their own case as hopeless, but he fortified every man with encouragement at his weak point.

He told the publicans, to "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." The tax-gatherers, to whom the Romans farmed out the taxation, were extortionate and cruel, for they paid so much to the government and then levied their own rates. He did not blame them for filling the political office, but lie charged them to stop all rapacity, so that a new miracle would be found, when men should see an honest publican. His reply was of great breadth, forbidding them to confiscate property by unjust exaction.

To the soldiers he replied: "Do violence to no one, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Josephus shows, that at this very time, Herod Antipas was sending an army against his father-in-law, Aretas, King of Arabia Petraea, who had declared war in consequence of Herod's bad treatment of his daughter. This being true, their route would lie directly through the region where John was preaching and immersing. This historian's full description of John is in perfect accord with the spirit of the above statement.

These hearers of the Baptist were men of the bow, the arrow, the sword and the shield; their trade was war. He stood before them the living image of discipline and self-denial, and demanded of them, that they keep the insolent licentiousness and brutality of war in check, and disregard the lying doctrine that might makes right. In prosecuting their hard craft, godless pillage must cease.

What lessons of love were these, enforced upon rough, heathen legions by which an unarmed young Baptist preacher tamed the fierceness of military tigers, and remanded desperate warriors back to the camp and field, made by their new faith as harmless as doves. Last of all, he threw the bridle over their license of riot and plunder, to curb them with a double bit. They must commit no robbery upon the conquered, indulge no selfishness, raise no mutiny against their officers to get more pay, but take their three oboloi a day; and be content.

Such a scene had never been witnessed on earth, and the most remarkable thing about it was, that so sweeping a ministry provoked no physical resistance. Jewish priests had shed streams of sacrificial blood at the altar for hundreds of years, whenever the nation groaned beneath the heel of its foes. They sighed for the tender mercy of God to rescue them from the hand of their enemy, and guide their feet anew into the way of peace. But now, while they felt the rankling humiliation of a hated race, and their hearts sank as they looked at the broken sceptre of their nation, a stern preacher of their own race stings them with rebuke, and demands not sacrifice but repentance.

The Ark of the Covenant was no longer there with its Tables of Stone. Urim and Thummim were gone. The glory of Bright Presence had departed forever from the most Holy place. The Golden Candlestick gave no light. Their ensigns were torn, their minstrelsy hushed, their royalty beggared, and their covenant with God broken. Was not this enough?



Their hearts sank within them when they remembered the past, in which they were never again to take lot or part, and the hatred of their hearts toward their foes filled them to the brim. Yet, without one word of sympathy for all this, they were warned to flee from coming wrath, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, to bury all their old sins with their bodies under the waves of Jordan, and to rise into the New Kingdom; and without a murmur it was done!



## God's Finance Plan

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E. L. Bynum

We have chosen one of the most unpopular sermon subject for our message today. People do not object to hearing about money at the grocery store, clothing store, amusement park and appliance store, but they vigorously object to hearing anything about it in Church. Millions of Christians make regular weekly or monthly payments to stores, banks, and finance companies, to pay for necessities and luxuries. Yet, when it is suggested that the Christian ought to give part of his income regularly for the financing of the Lord's work, many will plead their inability to do so.

Millions of Americans are buying things that they don't need, with money that they don't have, to impress people that they don't like. The Christian should not be associated with this way of life.

Instead of accepting God's plan of financing His work, thousands of Churches have substituted their own unscriptural plans. Some churches enter the junk business by sponsoring a RUMMAGE SALE. Others get in the restaurant business by serving hamburgers at the fair or sponsoring a fund raising chili supper. The car wash has become exceedingly popular in recent years, especially with the younger set. The church can easily go in the dry goods business, if the ladies will get busy and make the aprons or they can be purchased ready-made.

There is easy profit (so they say) to be made for the church, by selling candy, jelly, tulip bulbs, and dozens of others items, door to door in your neighborhood. Many companies are anxious to send their merchandise on consignment to any church that will use this method to raise money. Some churches (so-called), get in the gambling business by sponsoring bingo parties, etc. Funds may be solicited from door to door or from business organizations, this puts the church in the begging business. The members can be pressured into signing pledge cards, and this puts the church in the bill collecting business. None of these unholy, unscriptural plans need be used if God's plan is adopted.

### I. GOD'S PLAN

"How much shall I give?" This is a question that Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. These are the commandments, which the LORD COMMANDED Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai." Leviticus 27:30-32, 34.

Under the law, Israel was told that the tithe (one tenth) of all the increase belonged to the Lord. It was the Lord's possession. Therefore, man was not to use it for himself. If he wanted to redeem or keep part of this tithe, whether it was the seed of the land, fruit of the tree, or lamb of the flock, he had to give equal value plus 20%.

Many other scriptures could be given concerning God's plan under the law, but we believe this one scripture proves beyond any doubt that the tithe belonged to the Lord.

## **2. GOD'S PLAN BEFORE THE LAW**

In Genesis 14:18-20 we have the first mention of the tithe in the Bible. In the New Testament we read also of this event. "For this Melchisedec, King of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a TENTH part of all; first being by interpretation King of Righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the TENTH of the spoils." Hebrews 7:1-4.

Many object to tithing since it was a part of the commandments of God under the LAW. However, we make bold to say, that Abraham gave the tithe over 400 years before the law was given at mount Sinai. You want proof? "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. . . . And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." Galatians 3:16, 17. Abraham lived and practiced the tithe over 400 years before the law.

We find Jacob making a vow unto the Lord in Genesis 28:22. He told God, "of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Of course this also took place many years before the law.

## **3. GOD'S PLAN UNDER GRACE**

We are privileged to live under grace and not under law. Surely no Christian would prefer to live under the Old Testament Law. The Law was severe. A man could be stoned to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath day. No fire could be kindled on the Sabbath day. Should we do less for God today, than Israel did for God under the Law?

Jesus commended the tithe. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for YE PAY TITHE of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: THESE OUGHT YOU TO HAVE DONE, and not to leave the other undone." Matthew 23:23.

Jesus did not discourage them from tithing for He told them that they ought to do it. Jesus Himself was a tither. The Pharisees and Sadducees constantly sought to prove that Jesus had sinned by breaking the Law. If he had failed to tithe, they would have accused Him openly.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that here be no gatherings when I come." I Corinthians 16:2. Someone has pointed out five wonderful things about this scripture.

**GIVE PERIODICALLY.** "first day of the week." This is regular giving.

**GIVE PERSONALLY.** "every one of you". No one else can do it for you.

**GIVE PROVIDENTIALLY.** "as God hath prospered". True prosperity comes from the Lord.

**GIVE PROPORTIONATELY.** "as God has prospered". Give in proportion to your income.

**GIVE PREVENTIVELY.** "that there be no gatherings when I come." It is better to give each week than to wait for the "gatherings."

Under God's wonderful plan of finance, there can and should be equality in giving. The poorest man with the smallest income, can be just as obedient as the richest man with the largest income. In fact, the poor man is more

likely to be obedient than the rich man. The paper boy who makes \$10.00 a week can give \$1.00. The mechanic who makes \$100.00 a week can give \$10.00. The business man who makes \$1,000.00 a week can give \$100.00. In the eyes of God there is complete equality in their giving. There is no room for boasting by either one of the three.

"For if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality...II Corinthians 8:12-14.

## **II. GOD'S PLACE**

Many people have the mistaken notion that they can give God's tithes and offerings to whomsoever they will. Some want to take the money that belongs to the Lord and divide it up among certain radio preachers. Others want to give the Lord's money to charitable organizations. Some would even dare to take it and support sick relatives with it. But, what saith the Lord?

"But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes . . . thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes . . . and your freewill-offerings...Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest." Deuteronomy 12:5, 6, 8, 13. Israel did not choose the place to take their tithes and free-will offerings, but God chose the place.

The principle of storehouse tithing is found throughout the Bible. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. . ." Malachi 3:10. We find in the New Testament that the members of the early Church, "brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet." Acts 4:37. Their offerings were brought to the Church. This is the way it should be. If a church is worthy of your membership, it is worthy to be God's storehouse to receive your tithes and offerings. If you can't trust them with money, you can't trust them with your membership. The storehouse principle is found in I Corinthians 16:2. "Let every one of you lay by him in STORE."

## **III. GOD'S PROMISE**

### **1. GOD'S PROMISE FOR DISOBEDIENCE**

"He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." II Cor. 9:6. A farmer who is stingy with his seed, may save money at planting time, but he will certainly lose money at the harvest time. " . . . There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." Proverbs 11:24.

Many times God's child may be tempted to covet that which belongs to the Lord. This unholy desire for money, leads to heartache and sorrow. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil. . . ." I Timothy 6:9, 10. "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Malachi 3:9.

It is impossible for a Christian to rob God and get by with it. Many respectable, pious people sit in Church every Sunday, hoping that they can get by with robbing God. It can't be done. I am reminded of the usher who got tired of seeing a well to do church member who never gave anything in the offering. One Sunday the usher curtly said to the covetous member, "Go ahead and take some, the money is for the heathen anyway."

### **2. GOD'S PROMISE FOR OBEDIENCE**

". . . He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully . . . God loveth a cheerful giver." II Cor. 9:6, 7.

"Bring ye all the TITHES into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and PROVE ME now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits

of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts." Malachi 3:10, 11.

"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Proverbs 3:9, 10.

"The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Proverbs 11:25.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Luke 6:38.

It is plain to see from the above scriptures that we cannot out give God. His wonderful promises endure forever. One tenth of all that we receive belongs to Him. This means that ten cents out of every dollar that we receive does not belong to us. If we spend the money that belongs to the Lord, we are merely robbing God of that which belongs to Him. If we steal from man, we can easily get into very serious trouble. If we steal from God, we will get into serious trouble.

It pays to be honest with God. We never lose anything worthwhile when we give the Lord His tithe. In fact, we can get along much better with nine tenths of our income with the Lord's blessing upon it, than we can with ten tenths with the Lord's curse upon it. I am persuaded that every Christian tithes. Some bring it to the Lord's storehouse where it belongs, while others take it to the doctor, hospital, repair man, etc.

Not only should we give the tithe unto the Lord, but we should also give a free-will offering. This will bring untold blessings to the Christian who gives out of a heart of love, regular free-will offerings unto the Lord.

#### IV. GOD'S PURPOSE

God owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and all the gold in the hills are His. Why does God want us to give to Him? It is not because God is poor. He can get along well without our money, but we cannot get along without His blessings.

##### **1. GOD WOULD CURE OUR SELFISHNESS**

Man is inherently selfish and self-centered. God wants us to give, that we might begin to really live. Someone has said, "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving."

##### **2. GOD WANTS US TO PROSPER**

We cannot prosper, if we are being dishonest with God. According to God's promises, we will prosper spiritually and materially if we give out of a heart of love.

##### **3. GOD WANTS US TO SHARE IN THE BLESSING OF SPREADING THE GOSPEL**

God could have sent angels to preach the Gospel, but He did not. He could have chosen some other method to finance the spreading of the Gospel, but He did not. What a thrill to know that God has given us the opportunity of helping in the spread of the Gospel of salvation. Millions of people have never heard of the plan of salvation. Millions of others in foreign lands have not even heard the name of Jesus Christ. This is not right, because the Lord told us to "preach the Gospel to every creature."

Christians in America live in luxury, while thousands of people die without Christ every day. Christians have money to make payments on cars, houses, clothes, television sets, vacations, fishing trips and countless other items. Then some of them have the audacity to say that they cannot afford to tithe and give a free-will offering.

The average cigarette smoking church member smokes at least one pack a day. This will amount to around \$146.00 a year. Fifty such smokers could quit their cigarettes and use that same amount of money to keep one missionary family on the foreign field for one year. For those 50 smokers are spending over seven thousand dollars a year for cigarettes. Besides this, these same fifty people would save thousands of dollars in doctor bills each year.

Every Christian ought to regularly give an offering through their church for missions. This should be above and beyond the regular tithe.

#### **4. GOD WANTS US TO EARN ETERNAL REWARDS**

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21. There is coming a day when we shall be rewarded according to our works. Faithful living and faithful giving will bring eternal rewards. We cannot take anything with us when we die, but we can send it on ahead.

In the Readers Digest for June 1964, was printed one of the most amazing success stories of our time. In 1945 a badly battered Japan surrendered. Her economy was shattered, her cities bombed out, and there seemed very little hope for the future. Two young Japanese men combined their assets and talents to found the Sony electronics firm. They managed to acquire the use of part of a burned out building. They incorporated the firm in May of 1946 with a capital of \$527.00.

Today Sony is known worldwide as one of the largest electronic firms in the world. Their miniature television sets, transistor radios and tape recorders are marketed worldwide. The amazing part about the story is as follows: If you had invested \$100.00 in 1946 in Sony, you now would be worth 7 million dollars (\$7,000,000.00). Many people have probably regretted many times that they did not invest in this company.

In 1946 I had very little money, but I could have invested \$100.00, if the opportunity had presented itself and I had wanted to. If I had, I would now be worth over 7 million dollars. Such opportunities are few and far between.

Somehow I believe that God will pay greater dividends than Sony or any other company. Who can say what \$100.00 invested in the Lord's work now, will amount to in eternity? I know that we shall not walk the streets of gold counting our money in heaven.

God's great eternal rewards will be far more valuable than money could ever be. There amid the great beauties of heaven, basking in the light of His wonderful presence, we will have all of eternity to enjoy the blessed rewards He shall give us. We shall not regret then, the tithe that we have given Him. If there is any regret, it will be that we did not give more to Him, and do more for Him. Not what we grab, but what we give, makes us rich. Or as Jim Elliot wrote in his diary before his martyrdom by the Auca Indians, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Only one life, t'will soon be past.  
Only what's done for Christ will last.



# Sport of Kings or Prison of Fools? \_\_\_\_\_

*No one in the history of mankind has ever developed or operated a casino out of a burning desire to improve the lot of humanity."*

Chuck Gardner,

Former Nevada Deputy Attorney General

Every Christian ought to be able to visualize the place where his soul was brought from the pit of Hell; he should be able to visualize the crucifixion of Christ. Do you see the angry priests, the weeping women, and the apostle John? Can you distinguish the sneering thief from the repentant one? Do you see the nails, the blood and the roughness of those wooden stakes? Re-read one of the gospel accounts of the crucifixion. Meditate over it. Weep over it! If your visualization is accurate you'll see several soldiers near the cross. Perhaps they are on their knees as though in prayer. Look closely. They aren't praying! Those thieving and murdering mercenaries are gambling; gambling over which of their bloody hands will be privileged to carry Jesus' seamless robe away that night.

Those gamblers are the epitome of evil, while on the cross the incarnation of righteousness. Can you imagine those two reversed? Can you picture Jesus on his knees gambling over the property of another?

My Friend, gambling is contrary to the principles of Christ. It doesn't belong in the heart of any godly Christian.

## **The History Of Gambling**

Wagering is almost as old as the hills. For many hundreds of years before the first coin was minted men found other things to gamble with. Archeologists have found painted pebbles resembling dice which go back to the days of the Stone Age. Anthropologists tell us that gambling has its roots in the worship of primitive gods, in fact the Hindus until recently worshiped Krishna by gambling and often losing all that they possessed. This tie with idolatry ought to be enough to keep God's people away from the vice of gambling.

With the advancement of knowledge and technology, gambling has advanced as well. Not so often do we hear about betting on which oyster will open first or on what day the first snow will fall. Now we enlightened people bet on football games and dog races.

For years, the sport of kings while horse racing was called dice and cards belonged to the serfs and beggars, but today all of us have access to whatever gambling we want, from the back alley "crap" game and the sleazy bookie joint, to the plush casinos of Reno and Monte Carlo. Not only do we have access, but multitudes of us go. Public opinion polls reveal that two-thirds of all adults bet at least once a year, and 80% see nothing wrong with it.

Dr. Igor Kusyszyn of York University has said:

"We are pluck in the middle of a pleasure explosion. People are searching for kicks. They want to experience new and pleasurable sensations .... Gambling will pleasurable take the man out of reality, suspend him at a comfortable level of arousal and allow him to test his power of decision-making. Gambling also allows the individual to be a leading actor--a hero in a dream of his own making."

Perhaps Dr. Kusyszyn has pinpointed the reason for our rapid descent into the gambling dens.

## **The Waste Of Gambling**

There is no way to accurately estimate how much money people waste in gambling. Any figure must be merely a guess, but what a guess! Five billion dollars per year is spent in Canada in legal gambling (5 times the defense budget), and \$25 billion is spent illegally (some experts believe that illegal betting is 9 times as much as legal, chiefly on sporting events).

Albertans spend \$43 million on lotteries alone each year. \$28.3 million was spent in Alberta approved casinos in 1979; up over 33% in two years. Horse racing pulls in the biggest crowds and the largest bets; its statistics are astronomical. (It has been said that Albertans spend more per capita than any people in North America.)

Besides the legal, illegal betting is estimated at \$250 million in this province. No matter how you figure it, that is a lot of money, especially when you consider where much of it is going. A 1962 *Atlantic Monthly* article said, "Gamblers look upon it simply as taking a charge. But they are taking a chance which the nation and its economy cannot afford. They are putting dimes and dollars day by day into a vast stream of cash which finances most illegal underworld activities. (Here in Canada? Yes, Sir!)

Some argue that legalized gambling ends the illegal. Actually, studs in the United States indicate that the states where gambling is legal also have the highest amount of illegal gambling. The U.S. Justice Department's Organized Crime Section says, "Legal gambling creates a whole new (gambling) market, but the effect on illegal is negligible." Illegal bookmakers are still popular, because they offer better odds than state-run operations, and the winners are completely tax-free.

### **The Popularity Of Gambling**

Gambling has never been so popular! Never has such a large percentage of our population been so addicted to it. Never have governments been so pleased that their citizens are so mesmerized.

The Greeks claimed that gambling was detrimental to the state; today we use it to support the state. The Egyptians used to call it effeminate, because it turned working men into lazy louts; today the welfare leach often cashes his cheque at the track. Tertullian denied that dice players could be Christians; today churches head the betting parade and make fortunes off the weaknesses of betting fools. England once outlawed gambling entirely because wise officials could see what a terrible effect it was having on the people. Today England is one of the worst countries in the world for gambling debts.

One has said, "Swindling, forgery, theft--every crime that extreme necessity and outright desperation can suggest to a man who has lost all the moral ties--follows in the train of gambling."

John Cotton said that gambling was "a witching disease that makes some scratch the head, while others as if bitten by a tarantula, are laughing themselves to death."

US President Washington said of gambling:

"This is a vice which is productive of every possible evil, equally injurious to the morals and health of its votaries. It is the child of avarice, the brother of iniquity, and the father of mischief. It has been the ruin of many worthy families, the loss of many a man's honour, and the cause of suicide. To all those who enter the lists, it's usually fascinating. The successful gamester pushes his good fortune, till it is overtaken by a reverse. The losing gamester, in hopes of retrieving past misfortunes, goes on from bad to worse, till grown desperate, he pushes at everything and loses his all. In a word, few gain by this abominable practice, while thousands are injured."

A former Supreme Court Justice accurately noted that "gambling" is a general evil. It leads to vicious inclinations, the destruction of morals, abandonment of industry and honest employment, and a loss of self-control and respect..."

### **You Can't Win At Gambling**

Despite all the warnings of wise and good men, billions of dollars are wagered annually. How much of all this wealth is returned to the average foolish bettor through winnings? Ask Earnest Blanche, author of *You Can't Win*. Mr. Blanche studied 256 horse races. If he had bet on the favorite horse in every race to win, he would have lost his shirt. If he bet the favorite to show, he would have lost even more, and if his money went to the favorite simply to place, he still would have lost money.

The Irish Sweepstakes is perhaps the best known lottery. Did you know that only 40% of the proceeds go towards prizes, and that the chance of winning is **1/305,000**? The reason why we see more and more of these lotteries is because there is no way that the sponsor can lose.

Our biggest Canadian lotteries turn over a meager profit of 20% only because millions of dollars are spent on advertising each year. Even lowly bingos make a 50% profit for the accursed organizations which sponsor them. In a small factory in our city, 800,000 paper slot machines ("Nevadas" or "pull tickets") are printed weekly. The owner of the operation, a man we might call "an expert," says, "I know you can't win if you play habitually." In our province \$1.2 million is thrown into "Nevadas" and only pocket money is won in return.

Christian, if you know of someone who has broken even over a long period of time with lottery tickets, raffles, horses, football pools. or any other kind of gambling, you have found a rare individual. If for no other reason but the soundness of Christian stewardship, no saint of God ought to gamble.

### **The Danger Of Gambling**

Earlier this year one prominent church leader spoke in general terms on the evils of gambling and then tried desperately (hypocritically) to defend his church's long time association with bingos. He said that there is a sharp distinction between gambling as a relatively harmless diversion and gambling with the specific aim of "making money fast through chance..."

I fail to see his point. 95% of bingo players play for the money they can win, but more. Someone should ask this gentleman if he also advocates an occasional visit to the pornography shop for recreational purposes. Why not shoot a little "speed" or give your two year old daughter a shot of bourbon every other day? Just as it's a fact that the disco leads many into immorality; it's a fact that gambling on a small scale leads many to gambling on a big scale.

Ask the local members of Gamblers Anonymous--it's a habit and sin which always begins small. Every saint in Canada should oppose the desires of professional gamblers to expose the young to the "pleasures" of gambling, and while they're at it they should fight off-tract betting for the same reason. Aren't 50,000 addicted Canadian gamblers enough?

### **Christian, Don't Gamble!**

Why shouldn't the Christian gamble? Because it has the same relationship to theft that dueling has to murder. It used to be legal for two fools to kill each other with pistols or swords, yet at the same time it was murder for one man to do it to an unarmed opponent... Gambling is a legal theft. When will wise governments see that, like dueling, gambling is detrimental to society?

It is morally wrong because it is an attempt to get something for nearly nothing. It leads men to get that for which they did not work. It destroys initiative and creates laziness. It is completely contrary to God's Word.

And when will someone see that government sponsored gambling, lotteries and horse races, are really a regressive tax on people who, many times, can't afford to pay any more? Many of Canada's poorest citizens spend hundreds of dollars gambling that end up with the government, yet if these people were taxed directly there would be a cry for revolution. Why can't people see that this is nothing but a tax on idiocy and foolishness? It's the opposite of income tax; it's out-go tax.

There is only one good way to open a lottery pouch, and that's with dynamite. There is only one good throw of the dice, and that's to throw them away. There's only one way to cut a deck of cards, and it's with a hatchet.

The Christian gambler is financing sinners, hurting his family, perhaps destroying his marriage, ruining his testimony and shaming his Saviour. He is displaying to the world that his heart is in earthly rather than in Heavenly treasures. He is not permitting the Lord to have His way with his life and future, but in a roundabout way he is asking the Devil to be his guide and benefactor.



This writer has never yet met a Christian gambler who was consistent in his tithing to God. Gambling and the withholding of God's tithe are cousins in the theft family.

Whether it is matching for a coke or the coffee, a football pool, a dice game, a lottery ticket, a pool game or the casinos, it all has the same principle and leads to the same end.

Reader, if you are unsaved and addicted to gambling or anything else, let me point you to the Answer. Jesus Christ died on Calvary to redeem souls from the bondage of sin in every form. He is the Saviour. He can deliver you from your lusts and even yourself, if you'll just permit Him. If the Lord has convicted your heart about these things, then admit your helplessness and sinfulness, and turning from them, put your faith in the sacrifice of Christ. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* (John 5:24)



## The Kind of Church Jesus Built \_\_\_\_\_

Roy Mason

From the book, *The Church That Jesus Built*, Chapter 3

*"Jesse B. Thomas, in his great book, The Church and the Kingdom,' has forever settled the matter that the church emphasized in the New Testament is not the universal invisible church, but a local, visible body. It will be many a day before an intelligent man will even attempt to reply to this book, and no one will ever really reply to it."*

T. T. Martin, in "The, New Testament Church."

*"I have not been able to get from fifty years' study of the Bible a conception of the church as a great nation-wide or world-wide ecclesiasticism, embracing all Christendom in all ages and countries. To my mind there can be no such thing. The universal invisible church is to me nonsense. Nothing, as I understand it, is a church except a local, self-governing body of professedly regenerated people, organized according to the New Testament and acting under the authority of Jesus Christ, as taught and practiced by His inspired apostles and writers."*

Calla Midyett, in "Western Recorder."

We have seen that Jesus established a church, and have determined from the New Testament record that He did this during the period of His personal ministry on earth. It is now in order for us to consider the third question: *"What kind of church was it that Jesus founded?"* Just what did He mean when He said, "I will build my church"? If *all* persons were willing to accept the New Testament without bias, prejudice, or preconceived notions and theories, there need be no difference of opinion at all on this point.

Unfortunately all are not willing that the New Testament should be permitted to mean what it says. The clear meaning of "ecclesia: which Christ used to designate His new institution, does not fit into the church theory of some, so they have coined a new meaning for the word. In this way, by using ecclesia in an unwarranted sense, they have invented another "Church" than the one that Jesus established.

Rome, in order to justify her theory, overlooks the distinction that the Scriptures make between the church and the Kingdom, and seeks to identify the church that Jesus founded with the hierarchical organization that we today know as the Roman Catholic Church. In Catholic thought, the "Church" is the visible Kingdom of God on earth, and with them there are no churches, separate, local, independent bodies, but one great, all-embracing, world-organization under papal dominion and control. Accordingly we find Cardinal Gibbons saying (*Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 6), "The Church is called a Kingdom." And following this he goes on to show that the members of the Catholic

Church, although many are, to use his own words, "all united to one supreme visible head, whom they are bound to obey."

I not here take the time to discuss the difference between the church and the Kingdom. That difference is very clearly marked in the New Testament, as I will show in the next chapter.

The theories held by the various Protestant denominations (let it be kept in mind that Baptists are not Protestants) are somewhat different from that of the Catholics. Some of these denominations with the Catholics, repeat the Apostles Creed and affirm a belief in the "Holy Catholic Church," but at the same time attach to the words a different meaning. Protestants have conceded out of necessity that Jesus founded and established a church. And they have recognized the fact that if this church was a local, visible body they cannot be members of the true church, the one founded by Jesus, since the organizations that they belong to have, without exception, originated hundreds of years since Christ established His church.

In this situation only two things remain to do, either frankly admit their organization to be extra-scriptural and rivals of Christ's church or else devise some theory that will justify their separate denominational existence and still permit them a place in the ecclesia of Christ. The latter alternative is the one that has generally been taken, for there have been theories a-plenty. One of these is what is sometimes called "the church branch" theory.

It is the theory that all of the various Protestant churches are but "branches" of the true church. It embraces the idea that all are headed for the same place—all are part and parcel of the same thing—the Church of Christ. However, this church "branch" theory immediately raises the embarrassing question as to the identity of the trunk of the church tree to which the "branch" denominations belong. I use the word "embarrassing," and it is embarrassing in the light of the historical fact that all of the great Protestant denominations (remember again that Baptists are not Protestants) have either directly or indirectly "branched off" from the Catholic Church.

Of the theory mentioned above, Dr. R. L. Baker aptly says:

"The branch church theory has a great place in the popular thinking. It is untenable, unscriptural, and even unthinkable. Plant a water melon, let its branches run out in several directions, on one branch there grows a pumpkin, on another a melon, on another a citron, and so on until we have the various branches all covered in the Protestant melon patch. Who would not say this is a freak of nature, a real monstrosity? Yet this is the average reasoning of today amongst the branch theory people. 'Tell it to the church' would hardly work in such a wonderful monstrosity."

But the theory that is most commonly relied upon, by those who belong to apocryphal institutions and do not wish to admit the truth of Baptist claims, is the "Universal, Invisible Church" theory. This theory, which plays exegetical tricks, employs specious arguments and minimizes the importance of the true churches of Christ, is a theory that has been and **is** a curse to the cause of Christ. It is one of the most widespread and hurtful heresies of our day, and yet, strange to say, without foundation and contrary to common sense once it is subjected to close scrutiny.

The theory has variations, but in the main the holders of it maintain that the church mentioned in Matthew 16:18, the one that Jesus said He would build, was not the local assembly, but consisted of all believers of every church (or no church, as the case may be) everywhere. According to this view, one becomes a member of this church automatically when he becomes a Christian.

To believe this one must believe that side by side to-day exists two churches, one local and visible, consisting of men and women organized for the carrying out of Christ's commands, the other unseen and invisible and entrusted with no work or mission. Moreover, this involves that these churches have a different membership, since some presumably belong to the universal, invisible Church who have never joined the local and visible body. Not only that, it further makes Christ the author of two churches, unless we utterly deny that He is the Founder and Head of the local, visible church.

It ought to be clear to everyone that much is involved in the meaning of Matthew 16:18, and in the correct answer to the question, "What kind of a church did Jesus build?" If the church which Jesus promised was "universal and invisible," then it follows that the Baptist claim to perpetuity is absurd, and the product of an unwarranted arrogance. This being true, the Baptist claim to church perpetuity stands or falls according to the meaning of *ecclesia* in Matthew 16:18, and other passages of the New Testament.

After careful study of all the passages in which the word *ecclesia* occurs in the New Testament, and the Septuagint, and after examining to ascertain the use of the word in classical Greek, I submit the proposition that the church that Jesus founded was *the local assembly*, and that to use the word *ecclesia* to designate a "universal," or "invisible" Church is to pervert its meaning, and to fall into serious error.

I realize full well that for me merely to make the bare statement recorded above is not enough. Proof is, of course, required. But I believe that ample proof can be produced to satisfy any mind that is open to the truth.

Since the validity of the Baptist belief in the perpetuity of their churches hinges upon the *kind* of church that Jesus established, it seems advisable to deal with the question somewhat at length. I trust that the reader will pardon me if I seem to spend an undue amount of time on this point. It is because the question of the *kind* of church that Jesus founded is absolutely fundamental to the discussion of church perpetuity.

If the church that Jesus established was the local assembly, the Baptist claim that their churches are the true New Testament churches which have had a continuity of existence since the days of Jesus, is simply unassailable. I have a number of reasons to offer as to why I believe that the church founded by Jesus was the local, visible assembly.

*My first reason is that the meaning of the word "ecclesia" used in Matthew 16:18 irresistibly leads one to believe that the local assembly was meant. Indeed, locality inheres in the very word, so that it is really improper for anyone to speak of the "local" or "visible" assembly, since the only kind of an assembly that can exist is both local and visible. In this book I only use the terms "local" and "visible" because of the failure on the part of so many to recognize the truth that there can be no ecclesia or assembly anywhere without a place to meet. By using these terms so commonly used I hope to be better understood, although I realize that to do so is to use mere tautology.*

The very strongest argument against the "universal, invisible theory" is a correct understanding of the meaning of the word *ecclesia* or church. Indeed, to make a study of the word in the light of its usage in the time of Christ and preceding, is to see how impossible and absurd is the belief in a "universal, invisible Church." To make the word as used by Jesus in Matthew 16:18, refer to other than the local assembly is to attach a meaning to the word utterly foreign to its nature, and completely out of harmony with its ordinary use.

Let us briefly consider the word as regards its meaning in classical and New Testament usage:

The word *ecclesia*, rendered "church" in English versions, was not a new word coined by Jesus, but a word already in current use at that time and moreover a word the meaning of which had become definitely fixed and established. This being the case, it would seem highly improbable that Jesus, speaking to the disciples, would use the word in some sense altogether foreign to its current use, and that without a single word of explanation.

As one writer puts it: "It is not ingenious for a teacher without a word of explanation to use words to his pupils with a meaning entirely different from what they understand the words to have." Dr. Jesse B. Thomas says in his book, *The Church and the Kingdom*: "No such difficulties attend the construction of the language—it simply supposes our Lord consistent with Himself, and with the ordinary usages of speech, assuming that He whom 'the common people heard gladly' would not wantonly use words in a strange sense that would inevitably perplex and mislead the common man."

What, then, let us ask, did the word mean as understood by the people of that day? Says Dr. George W. McDaniel (*The Churches of the New Testament*), "Both with the Greeks and the Jews, the word denoted an assembly of the

people . . . Among the Greeks *ecclesia* was the assembly of the citizens of a free city-state gathered by a herald blowing a horn through the streets of a town."

Dr. Thomas says in another place, "It was the organized assembly of the authorized voters of the local community met to transact business of common concern. It corresponded to the town meeting of New England of later days."

Liddell and Scott (*Greek Lexicon*) define the word *ecclesia* as follows: "An assembly of citizens summoned by the crier, the legislative assembly."

Again, Dr. B. H. Carroll says: "Its primary meaning is: An organized assembly, whose members have been properly called out from private homes for business to attend to public affairs. This definition necessarily implies *prescribed conditions of membership*. This meaning applies substantially alike to the *ecclesia* of a self-governing Greek state (Acts 19:39), the Old Testament *ecclesia* or convocation of National Israel (Acts 7:38) and to the New Testament *ecclesia*. When our Lord says: 'On this rock I will build my *ecclesia*,' while the 'My' distinguished His *ecclesia* from the Greek *state ecclesia*, and the Old Testament *ecclesia*, the word itself naturally retains its ordinary meaning." (*Ecclesia the Church*).

Therefore, since *ecclesia* in its accepted meaning carried with it the idea of locality and organization, to make it refer to a so-called "universal, invisible" Church, possessing neither locality nor organization, is to do violence to the word and to use it in a purely arbitrary sense.

"But," someone objects, "does not the actual use of *ecclesia* in certain New Testament passages indicate a broader usage than to designate a local organized assembly?" In reply to this it may be said that in the Christian usage of the word there were three ideas, viz., an *institution*, a *particular congregation*, and the *redeemed of all time* considered in the light of a church in *prospect*. In each case where the word is used there is nothing that argues against the general usage.

To particularize: The word is used fourteen times to denote an *institution*. When it is used in this way it is, according to Dr. Carroll, used in either an *abstract* or *generic* sense. "This follows," he says, "from the laws of language governing the use of words. For example, if an English statesman, referring to the right of each individual citizen to be tried by his peers, should say: 'On this rock England will build her jury, and all the power of tyranny shall not prevail against her,' he uses the term jury in an *abstract* sense, i.e., in the sense of an institution. But when this institution finds concrete expression or becomes operative, it is always a particular jury of twelve men and never an aggregation of all juries into one big jury."

Then he cites Matthew 16:18 as an example of the *abstract* use of *ecclesia*. Matthew 18:17 he cites as an example of the *generic* use of the word. Then he adds these words: "*Whenever the abstract or generic finds concrete expression or takes operative shape it is always a particular assembly.*"

It is permissible for us to use the word "church" abstractly as did Jesus in denoting the institution He founded. But, as Dr. Carroll points out, when we begin to particularize we must, according to the very laws of language, settle upon a particular assembly of baptized believers in Christ. So we can see that the abstract or generic use of the word is, after all, at bottom, no different in meaning from the use of it to denote a particular assembly. And it is to denote a particular local body of believers that the word is mostly used—indeed by actual count, ninety-three times out of a little over a hundred times that the word occurs in Christian usage.

And now for the third idea contained in the Christian usage of *ecclesia*, viz., the use of it to denote the *redeemed of all time*, considered in the light of a church in *prospect*. At least two passages seem to use *ecclesia* in this sense, and these two in no wise militate against the general use, since this is an assembly *that exists only in prospect*. Dr. Carroll states the whole case very clearly in his booklet, as follows: "This *ecclesia* is prospective, not actual. That is to say, there is not now but will be a general assembly of Christ's people. That general assembly will be composed of all the redeemed of all time."

Here are three indisputable and very significant facts concerning Christ's general assembly:

First, many of its members properly called out, and now in Heaven.

Second, many others of them, also called out, are here on earth.

Third, indefinite millions of them, probably the great majority, yet to be called, are neither on earth nor in heaven, because they are yet unborn, and therefore non-existent.

It follows that if one part of the membership is now in Heaven, another part yet unborn, there is as yet no assembly, except *in prospect*. We may, however, properly speak of the general assembly now, because, though part of it is yet non-existent, and though there has not yet been a gathering together of the other two parts, yet the mind may conceive of that gathering as an accomplished fact. In God's purposes and plans, the general assembly exists now and also in our *conceptions* or anticipations, but *certainly not as a fact*"

I have quoted Dr. Carroll somewhat at length because his booklet is one of the sanest, most careful and scholarly examinations of the New Testament church that has ever been written. Many scholarly men fully accord with his position as here outlined. For instance, Dr. J. G. Bow, in his *What Baptists Believe*, writes as follows: "The general assembly and church of the first-born"--this last will evidently be *local* when they shall have assembled."

A *second* reason as to why Matthew 16:18 refers to the local assembly and not to the Church universal, is that Christ's own use of the word prohibits us from believing that He meant anything else. Suppose that one should hear a speaker use a certain term, the meaning of which seems doubtful. Later on in his address the speaker uses the same word at least a score of times, and in such a way as to be perfectly clear as to his meaning.

Would it be wise for one to judge that he meant something totally different in his first use of the word than in the twenty times in which he subsequently used it? Or would it be the part of common sense to interpret the meaning connected with the first use of the term, in the light of his subsequent use? This illustration sets forth the exact situation as regards the interpretation of Matthew 16:18.

Let us, for the sake of argument, say that we are in doubt as to what Christ meant by "church" in this passage just mentioned, which is the first in which the term occurs. Let us look at the other places in which He uses the word, and *see* what He meant there. We find, upon making a careful search that He subsequently used the word *ecclesia* or church twenty-one times.

Following the first place in which church is mentioned, we find that the next, and the last place in which church is mentioned in the Gospels, is Matthew 18:17, where Jesus says: "Tell it to the church, but if he neglect to hear the church..." To affirm that Jesus was here speaking of a universal, invisible Church would be to descend to absurdity, since it would be impossible for a church member to bring a matter before a universal, invisible, unorganized "Church" not possessing locality. Jesus plainly meant local assembly; nothing else would fit the case at all.

The other instances in which Christ used the word *ecclesia* are found in the Revelation. Examples are as follows:

"To the angel of the church at Ephesus;"

"Hear what the Spirit, sayeth to the churches;"

"The seven churches," etc.

With reference to the last example, Sir William Ramsey, world-renowned scholar, affirms that the seven churches mentioned were actual, local churches that existed at that time. In each of the twenty-one times that Jesus used *ecclesia*, subsequent to his utterance recorded in Matthew 16:18, He plainly and unmistakably referred to the local assembly.

As Dr. T. T. Eaton remarks, in commenting on this question: "The probability therefore is twenty-one to nothing that He meant local assembly in Matthew 16:18. A probability of twenty-one to nothing is a certainty. Hence it is certain that Christ meant the local assembly when He said: 'On this rock I will build my church.'"

Again, a *third* reason for believing that Matthew 16:18 refers to the local assembly is that Christ only promised to build *one kind of church*. He never intimated in any way that He would found the local assembly and also a universal, invisible Church, composed of the redeemed of all the so-called churches. Consequently when we turn to the book of Acts and the Epistles, and find local assemblies of believers springing up here and there, we immediately identify these with the church that Jesus spoke of. To do otherwise would be to assume that something else came into existence other than the institution which Jesus promised.

Therefore, since Jesus only spoke of one kind of church, and since the kind of church which we find in apostolic times is the local assembly, for one to seek to introduce a universal or invisible Church is to seek to create a second *ecclesia*—*another* than Christ began. This is to breed confusion.

A *fourth* reason for believing that the church referred to by Jesus was the local assembly is that the universal, invisible theory is not only unscriptural but according to history is post-apostolic in its origin. Harnack, the church historian, in his "History of Dogma," makes this clear. He says: "The expression, invisible Church, is found for the first time in Hegessipus, Eusebius, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Hiero, Cornelius, and Cyprian, all used the term holy churches and never the Catholic or Universal Church." Again in Vol. 2, p. 83, he says: "No one thought of the desperate idea of an 'invisible Church;' this notion would probably have brought about a lapse far more rapidly than the idea of the Holy Catholic Church."

A *fifth* reason for believing that Jesus founded the local as assembly is that the local assembly is not only the only kind of an assembly that can exist; it is the only kind to which Jesus could have entrusted the Commission and the ordinances. Christ's chief purpose in forming His church was in order that it might reach the lost with the gospel, and then might build up those saved by teaching and training them in all things He commanded. The functions of a church as outlined by Jesus can only be performed by a local assembly. A universal, invisible Church composed of an unorganized throng of "members of all the churches," is, from the functional point of view, simply inconceivable.

Again, when Christ promised the church, He promised that *the* "Gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Slight difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of the "gates of hades" does not obscure the fact that Jesus meant that His church would have foes and would encounter opposition. The history of Baptists as they were imprisoned, martyred, driven into the dens and caves of the earth, shows that His church has had to contend with the organized forces of evil. Baptist churches can be and have been persecuted, but a universal, invisible Church cannot be. Men cannot persecute an invisible something. Christ's promise is meaningless if applied to such.

A *sixth* reason that suggests itself is this: The conception of a universal, invisible Church usurps the place reserved in the New Testament for the Kingdom of God. Those who hold this theory practically identify church and kingdom. This is wholly out of accord with the Scriptures, for they make a very clear distinction between the two, as will be shown in the next chapter.

When I think along the line that I have tried to carry the thought of the reader, and am led to see the lack of any sort of foundation for the theory of an invisible, universal Church, I can heartily join with Dr. J. Lewis Smith in saying:

"Here, then, is the inevitable and irreversible conclusion. This Catholic or Universal Church as well as the Invisible Church idea are things of man's devising, and when we say, I believe in the holy Catholic Church, we are placing a figment of the imagination—a chimera—a misnomer above the real local church idea which Christ Himself used, and one of which churches He built and to which He gave His great Commission and His ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper."



# Close Communion

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Norman H. Wells

From the book, *The Church That Jesus Loved*, Chapter 2

**Editor's Note:** *Mr. Wells uses the term "Close communion" to describe what is currently referred to as "Closed communion." The term "Close communion" has now come to mean denominational communion; that is, communion for members of the same denomination regardless of their local church. As you read, you will clearly see that this is **NOT** what the author was referring to in his use of "Close communion." Rather, he uses this term as we now use the term "Closed communion"; that is, limiting communion to only Scripturally baptized members in good standing of a local Baptist church. "Open communion" still refers to the practice of allowing communion to all people regardless of their affiliation, baptism or church membership.*

True Baptists have always been the recipients of much abuse and unjust criticism because of their position concerning the Lord's Supper. The enemies of Baptists have always centered their attack upon "close communion." They recognize that "Close communion" is necessary not only to the well-being but to the perpetuity of Baptist churches.

How often the enemies of Baptists will declare to the world, "They refuse to receive people that the Lord Jesus receives." Many times it has been stated concerning Baptists that, "In heaven they are going to have a separate table from the rest of the redeemed."

Because of the attack that is continually made upon this great truth there is much sincere misunderstanding. There are those who are Baptist upon every point, but upon this truth they are perplexed and confused. To this group we prayerfully direct these remarks

This age is characterized by the abandonment of any principle or doctrine which is distasteful to people or which is difficult to apply or enforce. Because of the reluctance of the ordinary Christian to receive this truth many Baptist churches and Pastors have refrained from teaching it. God help us!! In order to make a popular appeal such great truths are completely forsaken.

The Baptist position concerning the Lord's Supper needs to be stated again and again. Baptists believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer; in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with the authority of the local church, to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life: that it is prerequisite to the privilege of a church relation and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church, by the sacred use of bread and wine are to commemorate the dying love of Christ, preceded always by a solemn self-examination.

The truth concerning the two church ordinances stand or fall together — they are inseparable. When a Baptist hutch is wrong on the Lord's Supper it follows that they are wrong on Baptism. The sins of "open communion" and "alien baptism" are generally found together.

In order to avoid further confusion let us define what is meant by "Open communion" and "Close communion." "Open communion" occurs when the restrictions that God has placed upon the table are lifted and everyone is invited to partake. "Close communion" is when the church administering the Lord's Supper limits the invitation to participate and maintains the Lord's restrictions.

Those who practice "Open communion" would invite to the table of the Lord those who are lost and those who are unbaptized. Those who are under church censure and those who have been disciplined are welcome. Those who deny the Lord and His truth are invited to partake of the bread and wine.

True Baptists do not practice "Open communion." They accept the Lord's restrictions to His table.

The doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper is so closely interwoven with the other distinctive Baptist beliefs that they stand or fall together. For a so-called Baptist to practice "Open communion" he must deny what Baptists believe about baptism and the church. He becomes guilty of presenting a false picture of salvation.

The true Baptist position has always been that God placed the two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the church and that the church, and the church alone, has the authority to administer these ordinances.

In Matthew 16:18 we have the record of Christ' establishing the first model church: "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

In Matthew 18:15-17 the power of judgment and discipline are placed the local church:

"Moreover: if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell I him his fault between thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one of two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

In Matthew 26:26-28 the authority to observe the Lord's Supper was placed in the church:

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

In Matthew 28:19, 20 we have the Great Commission given to the church:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The church and the church alone has the authority to go forth "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Also the authority to teach them to observe the Lord's Supper is in the church.

Christ Himself located the Lord's Supper in the church.

The practice in the New Testament was to observe the Lord's Supper in the church. In I Corinthians 11:17-34 we have Paul's discourse on the disorders at the Lord's Table in the church at Corinth. The whole discourse reveals that the Corinthians were observing the meal in the church. Read it and notice the language:

*"that ye come together not for the better but for the worse."* Verse 17.

To observe the Lord's Supper they came together as an assembly — the church.

*"when ye come together in the church."* Verse 18.



An honest inquirer cannot mistake language such as this.

*"When ye come together in one place." Verse 20.*

The established practice and accepted doctrine in these New Testament churches was that of observing the Lord's Supper in the church.

Paul states in verse 23 that the ordinances had been delivered unto the churches. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you — "

In I Cor. 1:2 we find that Paul had addressed himself unto "The church of God which is at Corinth" and unto this local church he had delivered the ordinances.

*"When ye come together to eat." Verse 33.*

The proper place to eat the Lord's Supper was when they came together as a church. In this entire passage the church, as a church was censured for a wrong observance of the meal. Surely if the church was admonished, as a church, for the wrong observances of the Lord's Supper the responsibility for a right observance rested with the church.

In this passage also, the church, as a church, received praise for faithfully keeping the ordinances.

The responsibility for a proper observance of the Lord's Supper rested with the church. The Lord, not Baptists, in His word has placed certain restrictions and qualifications upon participants of the Lord's Supper. He has placed the responsibility of carrying out these restrictions and requiring these qualifications upon the individual church.

God teaches in His Word that baptism is a pre-requisite to partaking of the Lord's Supper. All denominations teach that baptism must precede communion. It is an accepted truth for many reasons.

**First**, baptism was instituted and practiced before the Lord's Supper. John the Baptist never observed the Lord's Supper. Jesus was baptized before He instituted the Lord's Supper.

**Second**, baptism was given first in the commission to the church in Matt. 28:20. The order here is (a) make disciples, (b) baptize them (c) teach them to observe the Lord's Supper.

**Third**, the apostles practiced this order. On the day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2:41-42, we find this order of events.

*"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

*"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."*

Notice the order, (a) received His word, (b) were baptized, (c) breaking of bread.

Fourth, the apostles so instructed the churches. The people Paul was writing to in I Cor. 2 were those spoken of in Acts 18:1-11, " — and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized."

Fifth, the Scriptures make baptism the initiatory ordinance. It is the emblem of the beginning of spiritual life. Communion is the emblem of the nutrition of that life.

It must be agreed then that baptism is a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper. True Baptists will require scriptural baptism for all participants of the Lord's Supper. Baptism, to be scriptural, must meet the following requirements:

1. There must be a proper candidate. Only born again believers can be candidates for baptism.
2. There must be a proper mode. The only baptism in the Bible is by immersion.
3. There must be a proper motive. Our baptism is to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Saviour, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life.
4. There must be a proper administrator. As the responsibility for a proper observance of the ordinances was placed in the local New Testament church, that church, and that church alone, has the authority to baptize.

This is the Baptist position concerning baptism. This scriptural baptism must precede the Lord's Supper. All who have not been scripturally baptized are restricted from participation. This is God's restriction and the responsibility for carrying it out rests with the local church.

The scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper is inseparably connected with efficient church discipline. There is none who would deny that the authority to judge and administer discipline was placed in the local church.

Every organization which proposes to work smoothly, and yet efficiently, must have certain rules and regulations to be billowed; certain laws for the individual members to obey. God has set these rules, regulations and standards in the church and given unto the church the authority to enforce them.

That churches have a right to exercise a watchful supervision over their members, to reprove them when erring, and withdraw fellowship from them when incorrigible, is a necessity arising from the very constitution of their organization. This right was recognized by Christ and His apostles and was exercised by the first churches.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." — Matt. 18:17

Christ established the model church in the 16th chapter of Matthew and in this church was placed the authority to exercise discipline. It is needless to emphasize that this could only have been a local church. How foolish it is to think of a universal, invisible church exercising discipline.

We find this discipline carried out in all the New Testament churches.

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." — II Thess. 3:6

"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject." — Titus 3:10

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." — I Peter 4:17

"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." — 1 Cor. 5:9-13

God set the standards for membership in the local church and gave unto the church the command to maintain these standards. Those who refuse to abide by these standards were to be subject to discipline. Note these phrases from scriptures given above:

"withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

"an heretick after the first and second admonition reject."

"not to company with fornicators."

"judge them that are within."

"put away from among yourselves that wicked person."

Can anything be more clear than this? Church members who would not live according to God's standard were to be excluded from the membership of the church. Those who walked disorderly, heretics, fornicators, covetous, idolaters, drunkards, extortioners, etc. were to be excluded. The identity and privileges of church membership were to be withdrawn! This would include the Lord's Supper. The scripture describes these from whom the church was to withdraw and then states, "WITH SUCH AN ONE NO NOT TO EAT." This is God's Word! To invite those to the table that God did not invite is to break the command of God! Has any church the right to tempt a man "To eat and drink damnation to himself."? — I Cor. 11:29

I Cor. 5:12 plainly states that the church is to "judge them that are within." A church that refuses this responsibility rejects God's way.

Each individual local church is responsible for the discipline of its own members. One Baptist church does not discipline the members of another Baptist church. Each church is independent. The members of one Baptist church do not have a voice and vote in another Baptist church. Likewise, each Baptist church is only responsible for serving the meal to its own members over whom it has the authority of discipline.

From our study then, we see that "Close communion" is nothing more than carrying out God's commands concerning the Lord's Supper.

"Open communion" leads to an acceptance of "Alien baptism" and the universal, invisible, church theory. This is where the enemy attacks because here is where the lines of our identity are drawn. To lose this key position is to be swallowed up in the chaotic confusion of inter-denominationalism.

The first step that sound Baptist churches take that leads them on into modernism is "Open communion."

We believe we have stated the historic Baptist position concerning the Lord's Supper. All have the right to disagree! The strange thing, however, is why will churches and preachers deny the historical Baptist beliefs and yet still want to carry the name Baptist! If you are a Baptist, be one, if not, leave our beloved name alone!

