

Preaching
the Whole
Counsel of God
Volume 8

Sermon Outlines
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You Died Last Night!

Psalm 90:10

Thesis: To invoke thought and consideration of one's spiritual condition before it's too late to obey the Gospel.

Introduction:

1. Humans only have a finite but unknown expanse of time on this earth, Psa. 90:10.
 - a. Hidden in our subconsciousness is the knowledge that we only have a certain number of years, months, days or hours to attend the matters that occupy our waking moments in this earthly existence, Ecc. 9:10.
 - b. Consequently, the prudent attend to the activities that really matter to them or will matter to their loved ones after death overruns us, e.g. fun-in-the-sun, wills, deeds, insurance policies, etc.
 - c. However, how many of us dedicate the same degree of forethought to spiritual matters and our own inevitable demise?
2. Death, though, has a sobering way of directing attention away from fun-in-the-sun and the mundane matters of life, and focusing one's attention on the soul or spiritual things.
 - a. Imagine that the pulpit is conspicuously empty this morning. The preacher has not been seen this morning and there is no evidence that he has been in the building so far today. Then, someone comes with the news that **he died last night!**
 - b. Several thoughts might rush to the forefront of your minds: Where will he spend eternity? What will become of his family? How and when shall we secure another preacher?
3. On the other hand, suppose instead that your seat is empty this morning because **you died last night!**
 - a. Such a sad announcement could be made about any of us.
 - b. What questions might the Lord pose to the dead as they cross the threshold from life to the next world?
 - c. What would your answer be if Jesus asked you these questions?

Body:

I. Did you obey the Gospel?

- A. The Gospel of Christ alone is the source of salvation, 1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 1:16.
- B. Only those who obey the Gospel will be saved from their sins by it, Rom. 6:17; Heb. 5:8-9.
- C. Everyone who knows the difference between right and wrong and who does not obey the Gospel will be eternally lost in a devil's hell, Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
- D. Man's part in his own salvation includes: hearing the Word of God and faith, Rom. 10:17; turning from sin (repentance), Luke 17:3; acknowledging that Jesus is the Son of God, Rom. 10:9-10; being baptized in water for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.

II. Were you a faithful Christian when you died?

- A. Past faithfulness cannot substitute for present unfaithfulness, Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10.
- B. Can we approach the end of life with the same confidence the apostle Paul had near the end of his life, 2 Tim. 4:6-8?

III. Did you win one or more souls to Christ?

- A. Both testaments of the Bible emphasize the responsibility of God's people to convert souls, Prov. 11:30; Mark 16:15-16; Jam. 5:19-20.
- B. Christians need to "persuade" or convince non-Christians with the Gospel, 2 Cor. 5:11.
- C. Christians need to seek good works and bear fruit, Titus 2:14; Matt. 13, kingdom parables; John 15:1-8.

IV. Did you make life better for others?

- A. Final Judgment includes how we helped those around us who were in need, Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 10:25-37.
- B. Christians have responsibilities toward both Christians and non-Christians according to our opportunities, Jam. 1:27; Gal. 6:10.

V. What influence did you leave behind?

- A. No one, irrespective of his age or life situations, should underestimate his or her influence, Matt. 5:16; Josh. 24:31.
- B. Have you influenced your family with the Gospel of Christ, 1 Tim. 5:8; Luke 16:19-31; 1 Pet. 3:1-6 NKJV.
- C. Do you want to leave an influence like Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, Demas or Paul, Abraham, Dorcas, etc.?

- D. Everyone influences someone to some degree.
1. What is your influence?
 2. Have souls been brought closer to the Lord or closer to the devil through your influence?

Conclusion:

1. Had you died last night, your eternity would have been forever sealed! Do you like the way your eternity would have been sealed?
2. Though each of us has survived to this hour, it is possible that anyone of us will not live to depart this place.
3. Will Jesus say “Well done...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” or will he say “depart,” Matt. 25:23, 30; 7:23.

Invitation:

1. While yesterday is gone and tomorrow is uncertain, we have the present during which we can make preparation for eternity.
2. Erring Christians can return to the Lord, 2 Cor. 6:17.
3. Unbaptized believers can put their Lord on in baptism, Gal. 3:27.

God's Faithful Servant, Elijah

1 Kings 17:1

Thesis: To review the service record of a faithful servant of God.

Introduction:

1. Though Scripture records little about Elijah, he certainly is one of the most colorful characters in the Bible.
 - a. Elijah is first introduced in 1 Kings 17:1.
 - b. He appears in Bible history suddenly during the wicked reign of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel.
 - c. Elijah pronounces doom from the Lord.
2. Clearly, Elijah is regarded as the greatest of the Old Testament prophets.
 - a. At the height of his career, he confronted the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel.
 - b. In a single day, he turned the people of Israel to God and destroyed the idolatrous prophets.
 - c. Further, Elijah avoided death by being transported alive to heaven by God, and hundreds of years later he appeared with Jesus Christ in the Transfiguration, 2 Kings 2:1-12; Matt. 17:4.

Body:

I. Elijah was a man with a mission from God.

- A. God drafted Elijah for a specific mission.
 1. Many years before, God selected Abraham to be the father of physical and spiritual Israel; Abraham had to leave home and endured many tests or trials.
 2. God drafted a reluctant Moses for the mission of leading Israel from Egyptian captivity to the Promised Land.
 3. God appointed Joshua, and later judges, for specific missions.
 4. God chose King Saul and King David respectively to lead Israel.
 5. The Old Testament is replete with references to God selecting special servants for special duties.

6. The New Testament records that Jesus Christ especially chose the apostle Paul to take the Gospel to Gentiles, Acts 26:16-18.
- B. Elijah's mission was a particularly difficult one.
1. God commissioned Elijah to bear a divine pronouncement of condemnation to a king.
 2. The prophet Nathan found himself in a similar predicament when God had him condemn King David for adultery: "Behold, thou art the man."
 3. John the Baptist was murdered for his pronouncement of condemnation toward King Herod.
 4. Likewise, the apostle Paul preached righteousness, temperance and judgment to come before kings, governors and an emperor.
- C. Elijah's mission was not unlike the mission of Christians today.
1. Jesus Christ bore testimony before common people, religious leaders and high government officials.
 2. Jesus commissioned the apostles first to go into all the world with the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.
 3. Likewise, Christians today have the responsibility to condemn sin and demand repentance, Col. 1:23; 2 Tim. 2:2.

II. Elijah was a man who possessed human fears.

- A. Elijah was afraid to address a wicked king, but he was afraid not to deliver God's message.
1. God led Elijah to safety following the pronouncement of condemnation.
 2. Later and on another occasion, after Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel, Elijah fled his post of duty because he feared for his life, 1 Kings 19:1ff.
 3. His fears were much like those of his contemporary, Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:7-16; cf. Acts 9:10-17.
- B. Fear led Elijah to desert his duties without divine permission.
1. We might say that Elijah went AWOL.
 2. The servant of God must not allow fear or anything or anyone to lead one to desert the Lord's cause, 1 Pet. 3:14; Rev. 2:10.
- C. God preserved Elijah, and God will preserve all his faithful

servants.

1. God provided for Elijah on one occasion by having ravens bring food to him, and on another occasion a widow of Zarephath fed him in a time of no rain, 1 Kings 17.
2. God will provide for us, too, but if not physically preserving us he will preserve us spiritually, Rom. 8:28; Matt. 10:28.
3. Neither Elijah nor we have cause to fail to fulfill our divinely appointed duties.

III. Elijah was a servant of the Lord who sometimes was given to utter discouragement.

- A. Clearly, Elijah was discouraged, 1 Kings 19:9-10, 14, 18.
 1. God encouraged Elijah and prompted him to return to faithful duty and service.
 2. There is a heavenly cure for earthly discouragement.
- B. Like Elijah, we may also become discouraged sometimes.
 1. However, we must stay the course and continue as dutiful children of God.
 2. We communicate with God through our prayers, and he communicates with us through the Bible; we have enough to lift us up and keep us busy in the service of God.

IV. Elijah was a saved servant of God.

- A. Elijah performed the appointed tasks God had given him, though they were not without peril and great difficulty.
 1. Elijah condemned Ahab and Jezebel.
 2. He destroyed idolatry and its prophets.
 3. He turned the souls of the people again to God.
 4. Elijah further condemned the house of Ahab after Naboth was murdered for his property, 1 Kings 21:1-29.
 5. God took Elijah alive to heaven, 2 Kings 2:1-12; cf. Gen. 5:24.
- B. We remain the saved servants of God as long as we perform the tasks for which God appoints us.
 1. Initial obedience of the Gospel must be followed with continued obedience, Rom. 6:16-18.
 2. Christianity is not easy, evidenced by the numerous warnings and encouragements throughout the New

Testament, 1 Cor. 10:12; 15:58; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; Rev. 2:10; Matt. 7:21-23.

Conclusion:

1. Elijah was a man, serving God, not much unlike servants of God in all generations, including our own.
2. God had a special mission for Elijah, which mission he chose to perform.
3. Elijah was neither perfect nor without fears that are common to humanity.
4. Elijah, however, did his best always to faithfully serve God.
5. Elijah was willing to rely on God for the strength to stand pure in an impure world and cry out against evil, Eph. 5:11.
6. The weakness of Elijah was the frailty of humanity, while Elijah's strength was the matchless strength of God, Phil. 4:13.
7. Elijah certainly is worthy of our imitation respecting his useful and faithful service to God.
8. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, and we can exemplify the spirit of Elijah in our lives as well, Luke 1:17 ASV, NKJV.

Invitation:

1. We can be admirable servants of God comparable to Elijah.
2. We must first obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Mark 16:16.
3. We must after conversion continue to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Heb. 5:8-9; 1 John 1:9.

World on Fire!

2 Peter 3:10-12

Thesis: To fire up brethren to evangelism before the Lord sets the world on fire.

Song: *Will You Not Tell It Today?*

Introduction:

1. One of these days, Jesus Christ is going to return and set this world on fire, 2 Pet. 3:10-12.
 - a. According to John the Baptist, about the same time, Jesus is going to administer the ‘baptism of fire’ to the ungodly, Matt. 3:10-12.
 - b. Jesus himself said that unfruitful disciples also will be cast forth as withered branches to be gathered and burned, John 15:1-8.
2. However, the Godhead does not want anyone to be lost, 2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 10:1-3.
 - a. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ will come again (when least expected), this time for fiery judgment, Matt. 24:36-51; 25:41, 46.
 - b. Jesus will return “in flaming fire” to punish every person who has not obeyed (or if once obeyed, is not now obeying) the Gospel, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
3. In what unknown amount of time may remain before Jesus returns or we die, we have our job cut out for us.
 - a. **First**, we must save ourselves from this ungodly world and fire to come, Acts 2:40 “untoward” KJV; “crooked” ASV; “perverse” NKJV; Phil. 2:12.
 - b. **Second**, we must rescue the perishing from fire to come, Jude 23; Rom. 11:14; Mark 16:15-16; Jam. 5:19-20.

Body:

I. Two choices lie ahead for each child of God.

- A. Choice #1: We can set the world on fire through our evangelistic zeal.
 1. Inactivity on our part comes with a heavy price, Rev. 2:4-5; 3:15-16.
 2. It’s this simple: We either bear fruit or we burn! John

15:1-8; Matt. 3:12.

3. We are supposed to be “zealous of good works,” Titus 2:14.
- B. Choice #2: We can just coast along in life, content to let the Lord set this world on fire at the last day.
 1. To be sure, God will fulfill his promise to set this world on fire, 2 Pet. 3:9-12.
 2. The question, though, will we have made adequate personal preparation and helped others to prepare themselves to avoid the ‘baptism of fire.’
 3. God’s people who falter will burn, too, 1 Cor. 3:12-15.

II. Let’s set the world on fire with our evangelistic fervor.

- A. It’s a fair assumption that where there is smoke, there are at least a few burning embers somewhere.
- B. Spiritually speaking, though, there is no reason that we should be satisfied with merely smoke and a few glowing embers.
- C. We can’t set the world on fire unless we start **striking a few matches!**
- D. It’s high time that each of us assumes some responsibility for setting a few **spiritual brush fires!**

III. But, how can we set the world on fire?

- A. “We” defined.
 1. “We” includes the congregation as a whole.
 2. “We” also includes each individual Christian in this congregation.
- B. Evangelistic success is doomed to failure if individual church members fail to realize and accept their personal responsibilities for growing the Lord’s church in this community.
 1. Evangelistic success is not dependent upon organized or structured church programs, but individual Christian responsibility to tell others about the Gospel of Christ, Acts 8:1, 4.
 2. Evangelistic success is not dependent upon hiring others, such as preachers, to do our work for us in spreading the Gospel.
 3. Evangelistic success is not dependent upon the efforts of a few church leaders or other especially active church members, but each child of God must accept

some personal responsibility for growing the Lord's church, 2 Cor. 8:5.

- C. Imagine a congregation where each Christian realized and accepted his or her personal responsibility.
 - 1. Imagine this congregation if each Christian visited the sick, gave away tracts, enrolled people in Bible correspondence courses, set up home Bible studies.
 - 2. Imagine this congregation if each Christian had the courage of his or her professed convictions about the Gospel and the Lord's church to make it his or her primary goal to acquaint as many people as possible with the Gospel.

Conclusion:

- 1. Let's fight fire with fire (evangelistic fire versus eternal fire to come).
- 2. Let's purpose to individually participate in the spreading of the Gospel in this community.
- 3. Isn't it time that we as Christians conscientiously give our money, material items, talents, time and evangelize this community, like there is nothing more important to us in life and eternity.

Invitation:

- 1. Conversion by the Gospel should result in a firm conviction to unfailingly serve Jesus Christ daily as long as we live.
- 2. Are you ready to become a child of God and begin such a life of unfaltering, conscientious service, Luke 14:26-33; Acts 22:16?
- 3. Or, do you need to dust off your conviction and Christianity to begin anew, 1 John 1:9?

Jesus Is My Everything!

Genesis 3:15

Thesis: To view a synopsis of the extended mission of Jesus Christ.

Song: *He Is My Everything*

Introduction:

1. Jesus Christ is the scarlet thread running through the entire Bible—from beginning to end.
2. Jesus Christ is the heart of the Bible, without which the Bible would be aimless and pointless.
3. The cross of Jesus Christ stands center of the Bible and the extended mission of our Lord, i.e. everything looks forward toward or back to the cross of Christ.

Body:

I. The Bible contains a beautiful declaration: Jesus is coming!

- A. Genesis 3:15 contains a veiled promise about the coming of Jesus Christ.
 1. Genesis 12:1-3 expands upon the promise of a coming Messiah.
 2. There are approximately 332 Messianic prophecies relative to Jesus Christ recorded in the Bible, e.g. Isa. 7:14; 53.
- B. In the first century, John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, Matt. 3:1-3.

II. The Bible heralds wonderful news: Jesus is here!

- A. Angels announced that the Savior was born, Luke 2:10-11.
- B. The coming of Jesus was the fulfillment of John the Baptist's preaching, Matt. 3:13-17; 4:17.
- C. Christ's ministry ended with his sacrificial death upon the cross, John 19:30.
- D. He lingered prior to his Ascension to validate his resurrection, Acts 1:3.

III. The Bible chronicles heavenly history: Jesus Christ is ascending!

- A. Luke recorded the awe-inspiring Ascension of Jesus Christ in both of his epistles, Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11.
- B. Though our Lord entered this world under the humblest of

circumstances, he left triumphantly and in glory.

IV. The Bible records the magnificent present: Jesus is reigning as King!

- A. An angel foretold that Jesus Christ would reign as King, Luke 1:32-33.
- B. Jesus Christ claimed for himself a non-earthly kingdom, John 18:36-37.
 - 1. Jesus Christ will reign until the end of time, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
 - 2. Jesus used the words “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably to refer to the same divine institution, Matt. 16:18-19.
 - 3. Our Lord’s kingdom is powerful and durable, Dan. 2:44; Mark 9:1; Rom. 1:16.

V. The Bible discloses the happy future: Jesus is coming again!

- A. Jesus Christ will appear a second time, Heb. 9:27-28.
- B. Jesus Christ is coming to gather his saints to take them with him back to heaven, 1 Thess. 4:13-18; John 14:1-3.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Bible is all about Jesus Christ.
- 2. Our lives need to be all about Jesus Christ.
- 3. Our entire lives ought to revolve around Jesus Christ.
- 4. Jesus Christ ought to be the basis for our way of life and every decision we make.

Invitation:

- 1. Jesus is coming back for his disciples; is he coming back for you?
- 2. Look back to the cross of Christ for salvation, Col. 1:20-21.
- 3. Look ahead for eternal rest for those who have put on Jesus Christ, Heb. 4:9; Gal. 3:27.

The Great Sales Meeting

Acts 17:6

Thesis: To encourage brethren to accept responsibility for evangelizing the lost, and to set reasonable goals to evangelize the community.

Songs: *The Banner of the Cross; Onward Christian Soldiers; Soldiers of Christ Arise; Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus; To Christ Be True; Stepping in the Light; I Want to be a Worker for the Lord; To the Work; There's a Great Day Coming; Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims.*

Introduction:

1. Often, companies with a product to sell have **sales meetings** to pep up the **sales force**.
 - a. Some of these sales meetings rival high school sports pep rallies.
 - b. Companies insist that their salespeople make an **emotional commitment** to promoting their product.
 - c. The most highly motivated salespeople are those who maintain a high degree of company loyalty and who are convinced that their company's product is uniquely superior to all competitor's products.
2. Frequently, salespeople have **quotas** or **goals** that they must achieve.
 - a. A car salesperson may be required to sell a certain number of cars monthly.
 - b. Quotas or goals for salespeople are set within their reach, lower at first and ever higher as times passes.
 - c. The more often a salesperson or sales team achieves its quotas or goals, the more useful that salesperson or sales team is to the company.
3. Many times, salespersons are motivated by incentives or rewards.
 - a. Cold, hard cash—money—is an ever-popular favorite!
 - b. Sometimes vacations to exotic locations entice salespersons to reach or exceed their quotas, e.g. "Hawaii or Bust!"

- c. Of course, there is always the negative incentive of being fired for either poor personal performance or for being a poor team player.
- 4. God is an equal opportunity employer.
 - a. Every Christian is God's salesperson.
 - b. The whole world is the market.
 - c. God has an incomparable product—the Gospel of Christ.
 - d. God has set quotas or goals for his sales force.
 - e. God's positive incentive for being the best salesperson we can be is an exotic vacation from planet earth—to heaven eternally.
 - f. God's negative incentive for being the best salesperson we can be is to be fired—in a devil's hell eternally.
- 5. A word of caution, though, is in order.
 - a. Whereas in the secular world, numbers or quantity may be the overpowering drive, the Lord's sales force must also concern itself with quality, 1 Cor. 3:11-15.
 - b. Whereas some companies may be little concerned with ethics, of course, God requires his salespersons to conduct themselves ethically respecting the conversion of souls.
 - c. With the Lord, numbers are important, but numbers alone are not the driving force for the conversion of the lost.

Body:

I. The Bible is filled with instructions and examples of taking God's Word to the world.

- A. God has always required his people to take his Word to the world, even when his servants sometimes **did not want to**.
 - 1. The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel used the illustration of watchmen in a tower overlooking a walled city and its surroundings, Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:1-9.
 - 2. Sometimes these watchmen heralded news of peace, Isa. 52:7-8; 62:6; cf. Rom. 10:13-18.
 - 3. However, some watchmen were derelict in their duties, Isa. 56:10.
 - 4. Unfortunately, though, some people will not respond to God's watchmen, Jer. 6:16-17.
 - 5. Jonah is probably the most famous derelict prophet of God, one who refused to take the Word of God to the lost, Jonah 1-4.
- B. Especially in New Testament times, God's people often

eagerly and boldly proclaimed God's Word, in spite of frequent perils.

1. Brethren in Thessalonica went beyond their own community to spread the Gospel of Christ, 1 Thess. 1:6-8.
2. Though scattered from Jerusalem by severe persecution, early Christians told people everywhere they went about the Gospel of Christ, Acts 8:4.
3. The first century church so widely spread the Gospel message that they were accused of turning the world upside down with it, Acts 17:6.
4. No greater conviction and no lesser regard for personal safety could be cited than the example of John the Baptist when proclaiming the Word of God, Matt. 14:3-12.
5. The apostles of Christ refused to stop teaching and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Acts 4:18-21; 5:29.
6. Stephen became the first Christian martyr for boldly and relentlessly preaching the Gospel, Acts 7:54-60.
7. The apostle Paul suffered extensively while proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, 2 Cor. 11:23-28; Acts 9-28.

II. We need realistic individual and congregational goals toward which to strive in earnest.

- A. Jesus Christ firmly established evangelization of the whole world as the goal of the church and the Christians who comprise it, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8.
 1. Likewise, the apostle Paul defined the work of Gospel preachers or evangelists, 2 Tim. 4:2, 5.
 2. However, evangelization of the world is not limited to the duties of preachers, but is also the responsibility of every child of God, 1 Pet. 3:15; John 15:1-8; Titus 2:14.
 3. Evangelism is a primary characteristic of the New Testament church.
 4. Without evangelism, the church in its local sense will cease to exist, Rev. 2:1-7; 3:14-22.
 5. Christians are capable of telling the world about the

Gospel of Jesus Christ, Matt. 24:14; Col. 1:23.

- B. Congregational goals must be to energetically saturate this community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Gospel meetings, VBS, Bible Preschool and other activities to which the public is invited help to favorably affect the community with the Gospel of Christ.
 - 2. Public media such as radio, TV and distribution of Gospel literature in the community contribute to spreading the Gospel in the community.
 - 3. The local church must saturate its community with the Gospel through various opportunities.
- C. Individual Christian goals will contribute immeasurably to the success of the congregational goal.
 - 1. **First**, Christians must attend all the appointed assemblies and classes they can, for the world observes whether we have enough conviction to match our claims.
 - 2. **Second**, each child of God must always practice his or her Christianity carefully and faithfully, because the world is looking for hypocrisy in us.
 - 3. **Third**, each Christian must take personal responsibility for encouraging absent and delinquent church members to attend services regularly.
 - 4. **Fourth**, I challenge each child of God to invite one person monthly to worship or Bible class, arrange for one in-home video Bible study monthly, enroll one person in a Bible correspondence course per month and give away three tracts each month (one to the glory of the Father, one to the glory of the Son of God and one to the glory of the Holy Spirit).

Conclusion:

- 1. The local congregation has the responsibility to evangelize its own community, turning it upside down with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 2. Just as much as a lighthouse that fails to warn ships of treacherous rocks is useless, a congregation that fails to evangelize its community is useless, too.

Invitation:

- 1. The Gospel of Christ and only the Gospel of Christ is powerful

enough to save souls, Rom. 1:16.

2. Failure to obey the Gospel is eternally tragic, whereas obeying the Gospel makes one a child of God, 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 6:17; Acts 2:38; 8:22.

The Covering

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Thesis: Exposition.

Song: *Have Thine Own Way*

Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul sought to correct several errors in the Corinthian church through his epistle of 1 Corinthians.
2. The context preceding the passage about the covering pertains to the proper use of Christian liberties, whereas the context following the passage corrects errors respecting Christian worship (the Lord's Supper), 1 Cor. 10:23-33; 11:17-34.
3. Consequently and irrespective the manmade heading (Chapter 11), the context pertaining to the covering is about abuses of Christian liberty by women in public, including in public worship, 1 Cor. 11:1-16.

Body:

- I. Consider the text preceding the passage about the covering, 1 Cor. 10:23-33.**
 - A. These verses include Paul's discussion of eating food that had been dedicated to idols.
 - B. Christians are instructed not to use Christian liberties that may harm another's conscience.
 - C. Christians ought to be careful not to needlessly offend Jews, Gentiles or fellow Christians.
- II. Consider the text following the passage about the covering, 1 Cor. 11:17-34.**
 - A. Paul identified abuses in the observance of the Lord's Supper at Corinth.
 - B. Effectively, the apostle re-instituted the Lord's Supper at Corinth.
 - C. Rather than a matter of indifference except how it someone's conscience may have been offended, this was a doctrinal matter, concerned a violation of divine instruction, and God was the offended party.
- III. Now consider the passage about the covering, 1 Cor. 11:1-16.**
 - A. Verses 1-2.

1. The Corinthians were urged to heed Paul's divine instruction and imitate the apostle in its application to their lives.
 2. This involved using Christian liberty correctly, 1 Cor. 10:23-33.
 3. Consequently, this principle required the observance of customs, which if violated needlessly offended peoples' consciences.
 4. The "ordinances" under consideration in this context are defined by Strong as "the Jewish traditionary law."
- B. Verse 3.
1. Verse 3 shows the relationship between the custom of women wearing a veil and God's distribution of roles between men and women.
 2. The custom of women wearing a veil signified the subjection of women to men.
 3. Christian liberty does not excuse Christians from observance of a culture's customs if they are not contrary to the Bible.
 4. However, women wearing veils does not signify in western culture what it still does in some eastern cultures today.
 5. The veil custom is comparable to the eastern custom of washing the feet of guests as a hospitable gesture, neither of which are practiced in western culture, Luke 7:44-45.
 6. Essentially, we have replaced another custom, the "holy kiss," the handshake, Rom. 16:16.
- C. Verses 4-6.
1. The words for "man" and "woman" in this passage are words meaning "male" and "female."
 2. The covering under consideration in this context is a veil, covering or concealing the entire head, i.e. "the veil hanging down from the head" (*Robertson's*).
 3. The verses teach that both a man wearing a veil and a woman not wearing a veil signified incorrectly the distribution of roles between men and women.
 4. The words "praying" and "prophesying" indicate that this custom respecting the veil extended to public Christian worship.

- D. Verses 7-9.
1. In first century Corinth, a man violated local custom were he to wear a veil.
 2. This custom was consistent with the fact that God has placed women in subjection to men and men in subjection to God.
- E. Verse 10.
1. The custom of women wearing veils was consistent with God's subjection of women to men and the subjection of men to himself.
 2. The veil custom on women signified this subjection and the divinely prescribed roles for men and women, i.e. the words "a sign of authority" mean "a token of control" (Strong) or "jurisdiction," Luke 23:7.
 3. The introduction of "angels" is difficult to interpret, and it has led to many imaginative explanations hardly suitable for adoption; however, a plausible exposition is: "As the angels are related to God, so the woman is to man. God's face is uncovered; angels in His presence are veiled (Isa 6:2). Man's face is uncovered; woman in his presence is to be veiled. For her not to be so would, by its indecorousness, offend the angels (Matt 18:10,31)" (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown*).
- F. Verses 11-12.
1. Men and women enjoy a spiritual equality, despite the God-given roles for men and women with the corresponding symbol through the veil of that subjection, Gal. 3:26-28.
 2. Apparently, spiritual equality prompted Christian sisters in Corinth to dispense with the veil in public, including in the assemblies of the church, as well as speak in the worship, 1 Cor. 14:34.
- G. Verse 13.
1. The apostle Paul posed a rhetorical question, the answer of which was implied, "No!"
 2. It was not "proper" NKJV for a Christian sister in first century Corinth to pray without her veil; notice that other than citing what women proposed to do without their veils (vs. 5), the apostle did not sanction a sister "prophesying" in the assembly.

- H. Verses 14-15.
 - 1. Paul reasoned that “nature,” which is “native instinct” or “usage” teaches that it is shameful for men to have long hair and for women to have short hair; compare “nature” in Rom. 1:26 (Strong).
 - 2. The apostle used another word for “covering” in verse 15 that can be translated veil and means to be clothed with.
 - 3. Paul appealed to nature respecting gender hair lengths to illustrate the appropriateness of the veil custom in first century Corinth.
- I. Verse 16.
 - 1. Lest the consciences of Jews, Gentiles and fellow Christians be offended, Paul taught that Christian women in first century Corinth ought to continue wearing the veil, though they enjoyed spiritual equality through the Gospel.
 - 2. The veil custom did not conflict with God-given roles for men and women, but respected it.
 - 3. However, the veil custom was not a command of God.
 - 4. Nevertheless, dispensing with veils on women in public in Corinth, if someone vehemently argued for that right, was contrary to the teaching of the apostles and the universal practice of churches in the first century.

IV. Observations.

- A. The wearing of veils by women was a custom—not a command of God.
 - 1. The veil is neither a custom in our culture nor would it signify in our culture a woman’s subjection to a man.
 - 2. However, were a Christian woman to go into a foreign culture where she would be expected to wear a veil, she ought to wear a veil for the consciences of others.
- B. The substitution of a hat or cloth in place of the veil is not equivalent to the veil of 1 Cor. 11.
 - 1. In order to wear a veil respecting 1 Cor. 11:3-16, a woman would have to cover her head and conceal her face.
 - 2. Attempting to duplicate that first century custom would generate confusion and demonstrate a lack of

understanding between customs and the commands of God.

- C. Women wearing veils is comparable to other customs that were not divine in origin, and which are not practiced in western culture, e.g. holy kiss, washing a guest's feet.
- D. The passage teaches principles that apply still today.
 - 1. Natural instinct leads men to have shorter hair than women as a gender distinction.
 - 2. The Bible does not define "short" and "long" respecting hair length.

Conclusion:

- 1. First century customs are not obligatory today.
- 2. Christians have a responsibility not abuse Christian liberty by doing things that will needlessly injure the consciences of others or harm the influence of the church.

Invitation:

- 1. The plan of salvation appearing in the New Testament is not first century custom, but divine instruction or command.
- 2. Erring Christians need to repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
- 3. Unbaptized believers need to heed the invitation with which the apostle Peter concluded the first, recorded Gospel sermon, Acts 2:38.

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How to Be Happy in Misery

1 Peter 1:3-12

Thesis: Exposition.

Introduction:

1. The apostle Peter wrote this general epistle to first century churches throughout central and eastern Asia Minor, covering most of the territory not addressed by Jesus Christ in his epistle through the apostle John to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. 2-3.
2. The addressees were Christians, styled as “elect.”
3. Apparently, many of these Christians to whom Peter wrote were from other parts of the Roman Empire, but they had fled because of persecution, e.g. Acts 8:4.
4. The epistle indicates that Christians were being persecuted irrespective of Christians having fled from other quarters.
5. Since it was not possible to completely escape persecution, the apostle, then, instructed Christians essentially, “How to Be Happy in Misery.”

Body:

I. Praise and Thanksgiving, vss. 3-5.

- A. The word “blessed” in vs. 3 is a Greek word that appears only eight times in the New Testament.
 1. In each instance, it is applied to Deity.
 2. This is not the same word “blessed” used in the Beatitudes.
 3. “Blessed” here means to praise.
- B. Our Lord’s “abundant mercy,” unwarranted on sinful humanity, is nevertheless available for saving mankind and re-saving mankind.
 1. We cannot earn our redemption.
 2. We are “unprofitable servants” at our best, Luke 17:10.
- C. Peter and other Christians in the first century through the present are well aware that we have been “begotten...again,” vs. 3.
 1. The apostles had forsaken Jesus Christ and had been begotten again.
 2. Persecuted disciples had their faith re-established.

3. Christians of every generation who sin, but repent and “walk in the light” have their sins remitted, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7, 9.
- D. “A lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” was the basis for encouragement in the face of despair.
1. Emboldened by memory of our Lord’s triumph over death, Christians would straighten their paths, even in the face of severe persecution.
 2. “Hope” is expectation AND desire, with nothing doubting.
- E. The Christian inheritance provides sufficient strength to endure whatever is necessary, vs. 4.
1. The “incorruptible” and “undefiled” inheritance is not susceptible to taint, spoilage or “bait and switch.”
 2. The words “fadeth not away” and “reserved” mean that the Christian’s spiritual inheritance is imperishable or enduring, not affected by passing of time; it is guaranteed.
 3. This spiritual inheritance is not a present possession, but Jesus has gone to prepare it for us, John 14:1-3.
- F. Christians have God’s help to persevere that they might receive eternal salvation, vs. 5.
1. The word “kept” means guarded with a garrison; we are in the protective custody of God as long as we do not outrun our protection.
 2. “The Power of God” with which Christians are protected is superior to the power of all others.
 3. “Faith” is man’s investment in his own salvation and represents his cooperation with God.
 4. The phrase “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” refers not salvation from sin at one’s conversion, but it refers to eternal salvation in heaven with God after this life is over.

II. Joy in Affliction, vss. 6-9.

- A. Christians have reason enough to rejoice even in the face of trials or persecution, vs. 6.
1. The words “greatly rejoice” indicate the exuberance of Christianity rises above the bad things that may happen to us in this life.
 2. “For a season” reminds Christians that whatever

- persecution or other tragedies may buffet us, eternity in heaven is greater and longer in duration, Rom. 8:18.
3. The preservation that the Bible promises pertains to our souls, not necessarily to our bodies and life's circumstances, Heb. 3:14; Rev. 2:10; Rom. 8:28.
 4. "Heaviness through manifold temptations" acknowledges that the distresses and persecutions that accompany this life are far from pleasant, Matt. 10:22, 28; 2 Tim. 3:12.
- B. The testing or "trial...of [one's] faith" makes the child of God stronger, vs. 7.
1. Trials are compared to the refiner or smelter's fire through which precious metals are separated from impurities.
 2. The Christian's faith is strongest when tested or exercised.
- C. Through the Christian's faith, his joy far exceeds every possible reason for despair, vs. 8.
1. It is the child of God's faith in absence of having seen Jesus Christ personally that emboldens him, John 20:29-31.
 2. Saints scattered throughout Asia Minor had never seen Jesus Christ personally.
 3. "Rejoice with joy" covers the full gamut of happiness, as "rejoice" means "to jump for joy," whereas "joy" means "calm delight" (*Strong's*).
- D. The pervading goal of the enthusiastic Christian is the eternal salvation of his or her soul, vs. 9.
1. God is reliable and the promise of eternal salvation to faithful children of God following Final Judgment is assured.
 2. The only variable is man's perseverance, which in light of the appearance of heaven on the spiritual horizon, encourages Christians to remain faithful despite trials in life, Heb. 11:10, 13-16.

III. The Ministry of the Prophets, vss. 10-12.

- A. Salvation was the subject of prophetic writing, vs. 10.
1. However, the prophets were too distanced from the time of fulfillment to see the fruition of their prophecies.

2. This speaks to the divine inspiration with which they wrote, 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
 3. God's "grace" or unmerited favor was an Old Testament doctrine as well as a New Testament doctrine.
- B. The Old Testament prophets were unaware of and wondered when their prophecies would be fulfilled, vs. 11-12.
1. Paul explained the formerly veiled plan of God for human redemption has been revealed in the Gospel, Eph. 3:3-12.
 2. "The sufferings of Christ" and "the glory" afterward were chief topics of Old Testament prophecy, Isa. 53.
 3. If children of God endure their suffering, likewise glory will follow at the end of life with eternal habitation in heaven.

Conclusion:

1. Christians compose the family of God so that we are heirs of God through Jesus Christ as well as joint heirs with Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 4:1-7; Rom. 8:14-17.
2. Christians are saved by hope, Rom. 8:24.
3. Trials in life may produce much grief, but they are temporary, whereas the reward in heaven is eternal, 2 Cor. 4:17; John 16:20-21.
4. Trials in life actually make us better Christians, Jam. 1:3.
5. Christians have reason to rejoice in the face of trials, Matt. 5:11-12; Acts 5:41; Phil. 4:4.

Invitation:

1. The happiest day of one's life is when he or she puts Jesus on in baptism, whereby one's sins are taken away, Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38.
2. Whereas the return of the Lord should be cause for Christians to rejoice, rather unfaithful Christians will cower with the rest of the disobedient souls, Rev. 6:15-16; 1 John 1:9.

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For His Own Sin

Deuteronomy 24:16

Thesis: To emphasize individual accountability for sin.

Introduction:

1. Many religious people espouse doctrine that contradicts Deut. 24:16.
 - a. The Catholic Church teaches that every newborn baby comes into the world with the “original sin” of Adam on his soul.
 - b. The Methodist Church formerly taught that babies were born depraved in sin, but they changed their doctrine in 1910 (though Methodists still christen babies like they did before they changed their doctrine) (McCord).
 - c. Several denominational churches that have adopted Calvinism teach that some souls are born in a lost condition from which they cannot remove themselves even if they want to (and others will be saved and cannot be lost no matter how grievously the sin).
 - d. Many people believe that sin is inherited.
2. The Bible and denominationalism disagree about who is accountable when for what sins.
 - a. Much of the world attributes sins to little babies, whereas the Bible does not.
 - b. The Bible neither attributes sins to babies nor attributes other persons’ sins to babies or other persons.
3. There is a difference between inheriting someone else’s sin and suffering the consequence of the sins of others.
 - a. Sin is imputed by God to sinners, but sins are not inherited.
 - b. Even innocent children may suffer the results of the sins of their parents or others, e.g. cocaine (or other drugs) babies, fetal alcohol syndrome, abuse, neglect, drunk driving, etc.

Body:

- I. **The Bible teaches that children do not bear the sins of their forefathers.**
 - A. Sin is not inherited, Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:20.
 - B. Children enter the world sinlessly perfect, and later (when accountable for themselves) have sin imputed to them, Ezek.

28:15.

- C. Jesus characterized children as worthy of imitation for those who would enter the kingdom, which he could not have done unless children are innocent, Matt. 18:3; 19:14.
- D. The New Testament portrays respondents to the Gospel as men and women, not babies or children, Acts 5:14.

II. Every soul is individually accountable for his own sins.

- A. Even when groups of people are guilty of sin, the individuals who comprise those groups are guilty of sin.
 - 1. Sodom and Gomorrah were comprised of individual sinners, in which cities if only 10 righteous souls could have been found the cities would have been spared destruction by God, Gen. 19.
 - 2. The world of Noah's day was comprised of a mass of individual souls who were lost and eight souls on the ark who were saved, Gen. 6.
 - 3. Churches of Christ that in the first century were condemned by Jesus Christ had within them some individual Christians who were not guilty of the sin for which the congregation was being condemned, Rev. 3:3-4.
- B. Each soul will experience an individual Judgment in the last day because each soul is accountable to God, 1 Pet. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12-15.

Conclusion:

- 1. Children are not born in sin.
- 2. Unaccountable persons have no sin, i.e. babies and adults with the minds of babies.
- 3. Only accountable persons have sin imputed to them.
- 4. Each accountable soul must give an account for himself before the Judgment Bar.

Invitation:

- 1. Not one lost soul will be able to get by at Final Judgment by blaming someone else for his lost condition.
- 2. Many souls will be lost despite many opportunities to obey the Gospel, Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 6:17.
- 3. Many souls will be lost despite having been saved once, because they have returned to the world and sin, 2 Pet. 2:20-22.

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Now Therefore Perform the Doing of It

2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:1-7

Thesis: To exhort brethren to give themselves, their money and their service to God through the local church.

Song: *I Gave My Life for Thee*

Introduction:

1. The Bible uses examples of real people to encourage desirable practices and discourage undesirable practices.
 - a. Scripture uses Abel to encourage faithfulness, Heb. 11:4.
 - b. Scripture, though, uses Abel's brother Cain to represent sinfulness, 1 John 3:12; Jude 11.
2. Accordingly, the apostle Paul used examples of people in his exhortations.
 - a. The apostle warned the Corinthian church by referring to those who perished in the wilderness wandering, 1 Cor. 10:1-11.
 - b. However, Paul also used the Corinthian Christians as a good example to the Macedonian Christians, before then using the Macedonian Christians as an example to the Corinthian Christians, 2 Cor. 9:2-5.

Body:

- I. **Paul used the Macedonians as an example to the Corinthians for giving money in response to needy saints.**
 - A. Famine in Judea resulted in great need among saints or Christians.
 1. The prophet Agabas predicted such a famine, Acts 11:27-28.
 2. The (Gentile) church in Antioch of Syria sent relief to (Jewish) Christians in Judea, Acts 11:29-30.
 - B. The (Gentile) church in Corinth also **purposed** to send monetary relief to their Jewish brethren in Judea.
 1. The Corinthians volunteered a year before the writing of 2 Corinthians to make a contribution for needy saints in Judea, 2 Cor. 8:10; 9:2.
 2. Paul used the willingness of Christians at Corinth to

help needy saints in Judea to encourage Christians in Macedonia to give also, 2 Cor. 9:2.

- C. Going full circle, Paul then used the Macedonian Christians whose contribution was **ready** to encourage Christians at Corinth to ready their contribution for needy saints that they had **promised** a year earlier.
 - 1. Initially, the apostle Paul **instructed** the Corinthians to make a monetary contribution for brethren in Judea, 1 Cor. 16:1-5.
 - 2. Subsequently, the Corinthians responded with a **readiness** to contribute to needy saints in Judea, 2 Cor. 9:1-2.
- D. Paul, though, knew that it was possible that the church at Corinth might have **procrastinated** in his absence.
 - 1. Previously, Paul gave explicit **instructions** how to gather the contribution (**weekly**), 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 2. Before returning to Corinth, Paul sent messengers ahead in case the church had not fulfilled their purpose, 2 Cor. 9:3-5.
- E. Paul commanded the Corinthians to **finish what they started**, 2 Cor. 8:10-11; 9:3-5.
 - 1. He wrote, “Now therefore perform the doing of it,” 2 Cor. 8:11.
 - 2. Not only first century Christians and churches needed that admonition, “Now therefore perform the doing of it.”

II. Contemporary Christians and churches also need the exhortation: “Now therefore perform the doing of it.”

- A. There are needs today that also require the giving of money by Christians and the church.
 - 1. Today, too, needs include benevolence toward Christians (and non-Christians), Gal. 6:10; 2 Cor. 9:13.
 - 2. The other two facets of the church’s mission also must be funded by giving, i.e. evangelism and edification, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 14:12.
- B. Since the church incurs financial responsibilities, it is imperative to know **how** God wants those financial responsibilities met.
 - 1. Necessarily, Christians must contribute some of their money to meet the church’s financial responsibilities.

2. Paul provided the **method** of financing the work of the church when he wrote about the weekly collection for benevolence, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
- C. If any Christian must contribute, all Christians must give of their money to support the work of the church, Luke 21:1-4.
1. Each child of God should **purpose** or decide to give **cheerfully** and as much as possible, 2 Cor. 9:6-7.
 2. Yet, no one is expected to give beyond his ability to give, 2 Cor. 8:12; 1 Cor. 16:2.

III. The principle of “Now therefore perform the doing of it” extends to more than money.

- A. Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians to “perform the doing of it” is a burden in which a local congregation must bear a heavy load.
1. Imagine a congregation where its members consistently performed their Christianity, e.g. attending every assembly and Bible class possible, seeking opportunities to teach the Gospel to others or arranging studies for other brethren to teach, distributing literature, etc.
 2. Nobody else has the responsibility to evangelize this community, and no one else will evangelize this community with the pure Gospel of Christ if this congregation does not do it.
 3. The church of Christ is not a social club the prosperity and continued existence of which is of little consequence, this is the church for which the Son of God died to establish.
- B. “Now therefore perform the doing of it” is a principle equally applicable to individual Christians.
1. **Every material thing** over which we have control, including our very selves, needs to be put into the service of Jesus Christ.
 2. **Every waking moment** of the child of God needs to be consciously aware if not actively pursuing the urgency of reaching lost souls with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 3. **Mothers and fathers**, “Now perform the doing of it” respecting child rearing.
 4. **Husbands and wives**, “Now perform the doing of it”

- regarding your marriages.
5. **Children**, “Now perform the doing of it” respecting your relationship with your family.
 6. “Now perform the doing of it” respecting our entertainment choices, the use of our time and how we spend our money.
 7. “Now perform the doing of it” regarding the urgency with which we purposely live the Gospel before and take the Gospel to everyone with whom we come in contact, e.g. work, school, neighbors, extended family, etc.
 8. “Now perform the doing of it” regarding conscious efforts to further the cause of Jesus Christ in this community, i.e. grow the church spiritually and numerically strong.

Conclusion:

1. New Testament Scripture records that the method of financing the work of the church is through planned, cheerful, freewill, weekly giving.
2. Every child of God has this responsibility and opportunity to worship God in this way, irrespective of whether has much or little that he or she is able to give.
3. “Now perform the doing of it” in principle applies to varied congregational and individual Christian responsibilities.

Invitation:

1. It is past time for everyone present today to **get serious** about Christianity!
2. It is past time to obey the Gospel if you haven’t done that yet, Mark 16:16.
3. It is past time for Christians to put away their dabbling in sin and wholly commit themselves to the cause of Christ, Rom. 6:1-2.

A Fitting Sacrifice for God

Malachi 1:6-14

Thesis: To emphasize the futility of offering polluted sacrifices to God.

Song: *Give Your Best to the Master, I Gave My Life for Thee*

Introduction:

1. Malachi was an inspired prophet of God.
 - a. He spoke words delivered to him by God, Mal. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
 - b. Malachi was contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah, though he is unknown except for the book bearing his name.
 - c. Malachi wrote to Jews who had returned from Babylonian captivity.
 - d. He wrote the final inspired revelation of the Old Testament.
 - e. There were about 400 years of no new revelation from God between the Book of Malachi and about the time of the birth of Jesus Christ.
2. The history of biblical Israel can be briefly summarized as follows:
 - a. Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity in about 1490 B.C.
 - b. After wandering in the Sinai Peninsula for 40 years, Joshua led Israel across the Jordan River into Canaan in about 1450 B.C.
 - c. Some time later, God periodically raised judges over the next 350 years to avenge Israel of its oppressors, until God appointed Saul as King in 1095 B.C.
 - d. Saul, David and Solomon each reigned 40 years for a total of 120 years before the kingdom split in 975 B.C. into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.
 - e. Because of the northern kingdom's idolatry, God allowed Assyria to take it into captivity in 622 B.C.
 - f. Later, because of the southern kingdom's idolatry, God allowed Babylon in 587 B.C. to destroy Jerusalem and carry its inhabitants into captivity.
 - g. Persia conquered Babylon in 538 B.C. and two years later, the first return of Jews from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem occurred.

- h. Subsequent returns of Jews from Babylonian captivity occurred in 456 B.C. led by Ezra and 444 B.C. led by Nehemiah.
- i. Malachi prophesied about 400 B.C.
- 3. Malachi prophesied to a rebuilt nation of re-settled Jewish people.
 - a. The rebuilt Jewish settlement was less than 100 years old when Malachi received his revelation from God.
 - b. The Jews were subjects of the Persian Empire.
 - c. Old Canaan was highly populated with Gentiles who migrated there during the Jewish captivities.
 - d. The Jews had been influenced by Gentiles while in captivity, were being influenced by their Gentile neighbors in Canaan and were politically subject to Gentiles.
 - e. Consequently, many Jews turned to idolatry while pretending to honor God.
 - f. Marriages between the people of God and idolatrous people contributed greatly to idolatry among the Jews.

Body:

- I. **God refused to accept the sacrifices and offerings of his people, 1:10.**
 - A. However, God had demanded sacrifices from his people.
 - 1. The Jews were to offer **peace offerings**, Lev. 3:1-7, i.e. cow or lamb.
 - 2. The Jews were to offer **burnt offerings**, Lev. 1:3-17, i.e. cow, lamb or goat.
 - 3. The Jews were to offer **meal offerings**, Lev. 2:1-16, i.e. unleavened wafers or new grain.
 - 4. Jews also offered **trespass offerings**, Lev. 5:14-19, i.e. ram.
 - 5. They offered **sin offerings**, Lev. 5:1-13; 16:29-34, i.e. female lamb or goat, or two turtledoves or pigeons, or fine flour cakes or wafers.
 - 6. The Jews offered **daily sacrifices**, too, Exod. 29:38-42, i.e. two lambs.
 - B. One primary factor regarding each sacrificial animal was that it was to be without blemish, Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 5:15 18; **Deut. 15:21**.
 - C. In addition, sacrifices were to be the first fruits, i.e. God was to have his first, Lev. 2:14; Deut. 15:19.

II. The sacrifices and offerings of the Jews to whom Malachi wrote were not what God required of them.

- A. The Jews were in the habit of offering polluted bread on the Lord's Table, Mal. 1:7.
 - 1. If the Jews did not follow the direction of God regarding the ingredients, e.g. used leaven or made no difference between foodstuffs and sacrificial offerings.
 - 2. Such an attitude and conduct showed that the Jews despised or did not reverence God.
- B. The Jews were in the habit of offering blind, lame or sick animals for sacrifices.
 - 1. Their sacrifices were not without blemish.
 - 2. Their sacrifices were not the first fruits.
 - 3. They did not intend their offerings to be true sacrifices.
 - 4. The Jews were offering God the off casts, refuse or garbage.

III. God demands of Christians sacrifices befitting him.

- A. God deserves the esteem and adoration inherent in sacrifices.
 - 1. As our heavenly Father and Master, God deserves our honor and reverence, Mal. 1:6; Matt. 6:9.
 - 2. God is the great King and therefore he demands and deserves his due from his people, Mal. 1:14; Matt. 6:10.
- B. The supreme sacrifice God made of his Son entitles him to receive sacrifices in return from humans, 2 Cor. 5:14-21.
 - 1. God sacrificed his Son, an offering without blemish, for people of all generations, 1 Pet. 1:18-20; John 1:29, 36; Rom. 5:8.
 - 2. Jesus Christ is our sacrifice of unleavened bread, 1 Cor. 5:7.
- C. The whole Christian life ought to be one of a living sacrifice, Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 2:5.

Conclusion:

- 1. God will be adored and served.
 - a. Malachi's prophecy (and other prophecies) indicate that God would bless the Gentiles, who will adore and serve God, Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 62:2; Mal. 1:11, 14.
 - b. These prophecies were fulfilled when the Gentiles were "grafted" into God's kingdom and Gentiles readily received the Gospel, Rom. 11:1-24; Acts 13:46.

2. God will not accept polluted sacrifices, Mal. 1:6-14.
 - a. God does not want what is worthless to us.
 - b. God still desires unblemished, first fruit sacrifices.
3. In worship and service, God wants the best we have.
 - a. God gave us the best he had, Jesus Christ.
 - b. God reserves the best eternity for us, heaven.

Invitation:

1. Our lives, or giving, our service, etc. ought to be truly sacrificial offerings to God.
2. Non-Christians and erring Christians alike need to sacrifice the distractions of this temporal world and give themselves wholly to God, Acts 9:6; 22:16; Rev. 2:10.

Partial Religion

Malachi 2:7-9

Thesis: To emphasize the need for complete Christian dedication.

Introduction:

1. God, through the prophet Malachi, critically reviewed the conduct of Jewish priests.
 - a. The very ones who were supposed to lead Israel in the worship of God, instead led Israel “out of the way” of and “to stumble at the law.”
 - b. God’s own priests were instrumental in the corruption of the worship of God.
2. However, the corruption was only partial.
 - a. Though only partial, any corruption was significant to God.
 - b. To put it another way, partially correct worship of God was unsatisfactory to God.
3. The priests violated the covenant God had made with the tribe of Levi and specifically with the family of Aaron.
 - a. The priests caused Israel to transgress the Old Testament law of God.
 - b. The priests and other sinners were subject to God’s disapproval.

Body:

- I. **The Bible clearly demonstrates God’s will that worship and godly service be pure and unadulterated.**
 - A. God expects and only accepts pure religion, John 4:24; Jam. 1:27; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 - B. God does not permit mere humans to change the Word of God to suit their own preferences.
 1. The Old Testament sternly warns against altering the Word of God, Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6.
 2. Likewise, the New Testament forbids alteration of the Word of God, Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19.
 - C. God, through the Bible, has amply warned humanity to follow a divinely given path throughout this life.
 1. The Old Testament warns repeatedly to follow the pathway of God, Jer. 6:16; Isa. 2:2-3, 5; Psa. 16:11;

23:3; 27:11; Prov. 16:9.

2. Likewise, the New Testament warns over and over again to follow the pathway of God, Rom. 4:12; 2 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 John 1:7; 2:6; 2 John 6; 1 Pet. 2:21.
- D. Children of God should not waver from faithfulness in worship of and service to God, 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:11; Rev. 2:10.

II. Partial Christianity today is no more acceptable to God than was partial Judaism acceptable to him hundreds of years ago.

- A. Christianity has superceded and replaced Judaism.
1. The Old Testament was abolished, nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ, taken out of the way, and we have been delivered from it, Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:6.
 2. This generation is bound by the New Testament (which is the Word of Jesus Christ), Matt. 17:5; Luke 6:46; John 12:48.
 3. Old Testament people and New Testament people will be judged respecting good and evil according to the respective law of God under which they lived, Ecc. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12.
- B. There are a number of ways in which Christians can be guilty of practicing partial Christianity.
1. Infrequent or irregular attendance of worship assemblies and Bible classes is practicing partial Christianity, Heb. 10:25.
 2. Failing to contribute according to our prosperity is practicing partial Christianity, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 3. Gossiping and backbiting is practicing partial Christianity, 2 Cor. 12:20.
 4. The list could go on and on; habitually committing sin is practicing partial Christianity, Rom. 6:1-2.
- C. Some churches of Christ practice partial Christianity.
1. Congregations that compromise biblical truth to fellowship denominations practice partial Christianity, Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:11.
 2. Congregations that refuse to allow the whole counsel of God to be preached practice partial Christianity, Acts 20:27 ASV.
 3. Congregations that resort to gimmickry rather than

- relying on the power of the Gospel practice partial Christianity, Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18.
4. Congregations that exchange the God-given mission of the church for entertainment practice partial religion, Mark 16:15-16; Gal. 6:10; 1 Cor. 14:12.
 5. Congregations that refuse to follow godly leadership practice partial religion, Titus 1:5-11.
 6. Some congregations practice partial Christianity by espousing false doctrines or overlooking immoral conduct by their members, Matt. 19:9; Gal. 5:19-21.
- D. Partial Christianity is especially visible in the denominational world.
1. Adding instrumental music to singing in worship is practicing partial Christianity, Col. 3:16-17.
 2. Using religious titles for so-called “clergy” is practicing partial Christianity, Matt. 23:9.
 3. Wearing religious names that are foreign to the New Testament is practicing partial religion, Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 11:26.
 4. Having earthly headquarters is practicing partial Christianity, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
 5. Making human creeds is practicing partial Christianity, Rev. 22:18-19.
 6. Demanding miracles and new revelation today is practicing partial Christianity, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-13; Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3.
 7. Every deviation from the New Testament, and there are many especially in the denominational world, is practicing partial Christianity.

Conclusion:

1. Practicing partial loyalty to God was spiritually fatal under Patriarchy, e.g. Adam and Eve, Cain, the world of Noah’s day.
2. Practicing partial Judaism was as fatal.
 - a. God burned two priests alive with fire from heaven (Nadab and Abihu), Lev. 10:1-2.
 - b. The whole nation of Israel (excepting Joshua, Caleb and Jews under 20 years old at the time of the Exodus) perished before reaching Canaan, Num. 14:26-39.

- c. Later, the northern kingdom of Israel went into Assyrian captivity, whereas the southern kingdom of Judah went into Babylonian captivity.
3. Practicing partial Christianity is fatal, too.
 - a. Ananias and Sapphira tried to practice partial Christianity, Acts 5:1-10.
 - b. Simon the Samaritan tried to practice partial Christianity, but he was instructed to repent, Acts 8:22.
 - c. The apostle Peter tried to practice partial Christianity, but he was rebuked publicly by the apostle Paul, Gal. 2:11-14.
 - d. Demas practiced partial Christianity and was condemned, 2 Tim. 4:10.
 - e. Diotrephes vainly tried to practice partial Christianity, 3 John 9-10.
 - f. The Corinthian church and five churches of Asia tried to practice partial Christianity, but they were rebuked, 1 Cor.; Rev. 2-3.
4. Practicing partial Christianity is as spiritually fatal today as it was in the first century.
 - a. The consequence of sin is still spiritual death, Rom. 6:23.
 - b. Final Judgment is coming, Rev. 20:12-15.

Invitation:

1. Practicing partial Christianity will save no one.
2. Non-Christians need to embrace the New Testament only, Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians need to acknowledge their sins and seek forgiveness, 1 John 1:9.

Return unto Me

Malachi 3:7

Thesis: To show that God demands repentance from the wayward, for which he extends forgiveness.

Introduction:

1. The Jewish people to whom God spoke through the prophet Malachi had a painful history of rebellion, punishment and penitence.
 - a. God has always provided mankind with sufficient instruction through inspired men, 2 Pet. 1:21.
 - b. God has consistently condemned sin and demanded repentance.
 - c. The Old Testament is filled with references to God's punishment of rebellious Jews and various nations, e.g. period of the judges, Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.
2. The basis of both God's punishment and restoration to a right relationship with God has always been the Word of God.
 - a. God's call to Israel in Malachi 3:7 to repent as based on that nation's disobedience of the law of God under which the Jews lived.
 - b. God's forgiveness and a restoration to a right relationship with God have always necessitated first a return of the sinner to compliance with the Word of God.
 - c. Man must be reconciled to God, rather than God being reconciled to man, Eph. 2:16.
 - d. God has always been willing to restore the penitent, 2 Pet. 3:9, e.g. period of the judges.
3. However, mankind has not substantially changed from Malachi's day to the present.
 - a. Modern man customarily transgresses the Word of God.
 - b. God, though, is still willing to receive back the truly penitent.
 - c. Unfortunately, most people are not willing to return to God on his terms, Matt. 7:13-14.

Body:

- I. **Mankind throughout his history has consistently transgressed the Word of God.**
 - A. Ancient man began a family tradition of sin.

1. Adam and Eve introduced sin into the human family in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 3:6.
 2. The worldwide flood of Noah's day emphasizes the degree to which mankind alienated himself from God through sin, Gen. 6.
 3. Romans 1-3 record the heightened sinfulness of which all people are guilty.
- B. The ways in which mankind perpetuates the family tradition of sin are many.
1. Manmade religions and divinely given religion made over according to man's preferences perpetuate the human family tradition of sin, Matt. 15:9; Col. 2:23, e.g. denominationalism.
 2. Materialism supplants spiritual pursuits and continues the human family tradition of sin, Matt. 6:33; 1 John 2:15-17.
 3. Atheism (avowed or practical) arrogantly persists in sin with its opposition to God and his Word, Rom. 1:28-32.
 4. Every **false** way serves the kingdom of darkness in opposition to the kingdom of God, Psa. 119:104 "way"; 27:12 "witnesses"; 120:3 "tongue"; Prov. 11:1 "balance"; Jer. 14:14 "vision"; Zech. 8:17 "oath"; Matt. 7:15; 2 Pet. 2:1 "prophets"; Matt. 24:24 "Christs"; 2 Cor. 11:13 "apostles."
- C. Christians, like their ancient Jewish counterparts, sometimes transgress the Word of God.
1. Some congregations become characterized by sinfulness, 1 Cor.; Rev. 2-3.
 2. Several New Testament references list numerous ways in which Christians put themselves out of a right relationship with God, e.g. quarrelling, Eph. 4:29-32.

II. Regardless of the depth into which mankind sinks in sin, God is willing to restore penitent souls to a right relationship with him.

- A. God exhibited his willingness to restore lost souls by sending Jesus Christ, John 3:16; 1 John 4:14; Luke 19:10.
- B. Likewise, we are supposed to imitate God and forgive those who repent of sinning against us, Luke 17:3-4; 2 Cor. 2:6-8.
- C. Christians at Rome are a beautiful example of God's

willingness to save the penitent, Rom. 6:16-18.

1. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the obedient, Heb. 5:8-9.
2. Obedience is the result of love for God in action, John 14:15, 21.

III. In spite of God's willingness to save mankind, many refuse or neglect God's grace and mercy.

- A. Though a host will be saved, a greater number of souls will be eternally lost, Rev. 7:4-9; Matt. 7:13-14.
- B. Mankind should be careful not to despise the patience of God.
 1. There will be an end to the patience of God, 2 Pet. 3:9-10; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 2. The most grabbing words ever spoken will be uttered at Final Judgment, Rev. 20:12-15; Matt. 25:21, 23, 30.
- C. Opportunities to affect where one spends his or her eternity will cease once Jesus returns (or when we die).
 1. Judgment is certain, Heb. 9:27.
 2. No one will be able to hide from or avoid it, Rev. 6:16.

Conclusion:

1. Mankind has tragically separated himself from God through sin, Isa. 59:1-3.
2. God through his grace and mercy is willing to save mankind, Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5.

Invitation:

1. All souls have sinned, Rom. 3:23.
2. God will save souls who will return to him, 1 John 1:9.
3. God will save souls who obey the Gospel truth, Rom. 6:16-17; Mark 16:16.

To Arms

1 Timothy 1:18

Thesis: To alert brethren to the raging spiritual war about them.

Song: *Onward Christian Soldiers*

Introduction:

1. “To arms! To arms!” has doubtless preceded many armed combats.
2. A call to arms turns farmers, merchants, fathers, husbands, women and children into patriots prepared to go to war.
3. Christians are portrayed in the New Testament as soldiers, 1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:7; 2 Cor. 10:4.
4. Some Scripture refers to a war with the saints as well as a war in heaven, Dan. 7:21; Rev. 12:7.

Body:

I. The kingdom under Judaism was a physical kingdom, and sometimes God’s people fought holy wars, e.g. conquest of Canaan.

- A. Judaism was a civil as well as a religious system.
- B. Then, God’s people literally fought wars in which men, women and children were killed, e.g. conquest of Canaan.
- C. Because Israel did not completely destroy the enemies of God when conquering Canaan, Israel was led into idolatry and away from God by the very people they failed to destroy.
 1. Israel made treaties with the enemies of God, Josh. 9:3-15.
 2. Israel intermarried with ungodly people, which introduced idolatry into Israel, Deut. 7:1-4; Ezra 10:3; Neh. 13:26.

II. The kingdom under Christianity, unlike the kingdom under Judaism, is a spiritual kingdom that also is involved in a holy war.

- A. As a spiritual kingdom, the weapons of our warfare are not material or literal weapons, John 18:36; 1 Cor. 10:4.
- B. Yet, a spiritual war rages all around us, irrespective of whether we realize it, 1 Tim. 1:18.
- C. Christians are required to be valiant soldiers in the army of

the Lord, 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:7.

- D. We are armed adequately for battle if we gird ourselves with the Word of God, Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:10-17.

III. Who are the enemies of the New Testament kingdom—the church?

- A. World religions besides Christianity are enemy kingdoms, e.g. Buddhism, Islam, other eastern religions, Judaism.
- B. Denominationalism is an enemy of the Lord's kingdom because it differs from the one, true church for which Jesus Christ died and over which he is head, Col. 2:18-23.
- C. Apostate churches of Christ and false teachers are enemies of the kingdom, Rom. 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1.
- D. Humanism, atheism, hedonism and materialism are enemies of the kingdom of God, Prov. 16:25; Jam. 4:13-15; Psa. 14:1; 2 Tim. 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:10.
- E. False lights today are enemies of the Lord's kingdom, e.g. popes, apostles, 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

IV. How is the current holy war fought?

- A. If the New Testament kingdom were a physical kingdom (but it is not), God's people today would use bullets and bombs to wage war against the enemies of God.
 - 1. The Crusaders, Popes and other religious leaders in so-called Christianity who harmed or killed supposedly in the name of God did not realize that the New Testament kingdom is spiritual rather than physical.
 - 2. Moslems make the same error regarding the nature of God's kingdom and fly airplanes into buildings, detonate bombs, etc.
 - 3. The Lord's kingdom is not to use physical force to war against world religions, denominationalism, atheists, homosexuals, etc.
- B. However, just because the weapons of our warfare are not bullets and bombs does not mean that the Lord's kingdom today is not embroiled in a fierce holy war.
 - 1. God's people are surrounded and outnumbered by the allies of Satan.
 - 2. Sometimes our spiritual enemies include mothers, fathers, siblings, our children, other Christians, preachers, elders, coworkers, neighbors, teachers, governments, etc., Matt. 10:35-36; Titus 3:10 ASV.

3. Enemies of God are both without and within the church of our Lord, Gal. 2:4; Jude 4; 2 Cor. 11:26.
4. Christians must opt to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3-4; 4:7.
5. Compromise and tolerance of the ungodly world is not a viable option for the faithful child of God, Eph. 5:11; Rom. 1:32.

Conclusion:

1. It might be easier to recognize that we are in a fierce spiritual war if we used bullets and bombs.
2. However, it is a grave failure to not recognize the enemies of God that are all around us.
3. It is far greater a tragedy to make alliances with the ungodly world, Jam. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.
4. Brethren, the sinister forces of Satan ruthlessly and mercilessly bring about massive spiritual casualties to the right and to the left.
5. Even the spiritual bodies of fallen Christians lie in heaps all over the place!

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, will be victorious over Satan and his army, Rev. 17:14.
2. However, Jesus Christ is not the Captain of your salvation if you are not a Christian, or if you are not a faithful Christian, Heb. 2:10; Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9.

Friendliness

Proverbs 18:24

Thesis: Biblical exposition of friendship.

Song: *What a Friend We Have in Jesus.*

Introduction:

1. Friendship is a biblical subject.
2. Especially Christians ought to show themselves friendly.
3. The people of God ought to seek the right kind of friends, and they should be the right kind of friends toward others.

Body:

I. Friendship is a biblical subject.

- A. It may be helpful to define “friend” and “friendly.”
 1. An English definition for “friend” is: “one attached to another by affection or esteem,” and “friendly” means: “showing kindly interest and goodwill” (*Merriam*).
 2. The primary New Testament Greek word for “friend” is *philos*, which means: “dear...actively fond” (*Strong’s*).
- B. *Philos* appears 29 times in the New Testament.
 1. A friend is someone for whom one will fix a late night meal when he arrives unexpectedly, which may involve waking another friend from his evening slumber, Luke 11:5-6.
 2. Cornelius assembled his family and friends to hear the Gospel, Acts 10:24.

II. Especially Christians ought to show themselves friendly.

- A. Christians must become and remain friends of God.
 1. Our Friend, Jesus, died for us, and as his friends, we are obligated to comply with his instructions, John 15:13-15.
 2. Thinking back to the definitions for “friend,” remember that Abraham was “the friend of God,” Jam. 2:23.
 3. Because of what the word “friend” means, it become clear why Christians cannot be friends of the ungodly world, Jam. 4:4.

- B. Christians must especially befriend their brethren.
 - 1. Friendship essentially selects from outside the family persons to be loved as though they are family, Prov. 18:24.
 - 2. The family of God is comprised of such loved ones toward whom we are obligated to express love, Rom. 12:9-10; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17.

III. The people of God ought to seek the right kind of friends, and they should be the right kind of friends toward others.

- A. Some friends betray their friendship.
 - 1. Job's friends were sunshine friends, Job 19:13-19.
 - 2. Unsavory friends will lead one away from God, Deut. 13:6-9; 1 Cor. 15:33 ASV, NKJV.
- B. True friends are exceedingly precious.
 - 1. Friends give frank counsel, Prov. 27:6, 9-10.
 - 2. Friends love their friends always and strengthen each other, Ecc. 4:9-12.

Conclusion:

- 1. Friendship involves love and being lovable.
- 2. Especially Christians must befriend God and fellow men.
- 3. Christians should seek friends from among those who truly love God and them.

Invitation:

- 1. To befriend and remain a friend of God, one must obey and continue to obey the Gospel.
- 2. Jesus summarized the divine plan of salvation when he spoke Mark 16:16.
- 3. Jesus summarized the divine plan for keeping the saved saved when he spoke Rev. 2:10.

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Seek Ye First

Matthew 6:24-34

Thesis: to help Christians evaluate their priorities and make adjustments where necessary.

Song: *Seek Ye First*

Introduction:

1. Matthew 6:24-34 categorizes all human interests into two groups: spiritual and material or physical.
2. Spiritual pursuits are often difficult to recognize because we cannot hold them in our hands, etc.; they are not physical.
3. We more readily identify with the physical things that surround us in this life.
4. However, especially Christians must put the pursuit of spiritual things first above pursuit of physical things.

Body:

I. Mankind imagines himself too busy to devote himself primarily to God and spiritual matters.

- A. Overall, most people's lives are fairly predictable.
 1. We experience birth, childhood, education, rearing a family, job, recreation, retirement, and death.
 2. Instinctively, though, mankind asks, "Is there not more to life?" e.g. current songs.
- B. A lifecycle **with** Christ rather than **without** Christ makes all the difference!

II. There is a time for everything that pertains to this life, Ecc. 3:1-8.

- A. Without God, everything in this life is vanity, Ecc. 2:18-19; 3:9.
- B. Man wasn't placed on this earth simply to amass things, Ecc. 12:13-14.
- C. It is true, of course, that mankind must take care of himself and his family, which involves physical things, 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8.
 1. However, he must not develop an affection for riches and things themselves, 1 Tim. 6:9-10.
 2. Riches are not an end of themselves, Luke 12:15-21.

3. Death is the great equalizer between the rich and the poor, Ecc. 3:20.

Conclusion:

4. The physical things of this world are not the only reality.
5. The reality of spiritual things is more important than the temporary things of this life.

Invitation:

1. Isn't it time that we face reality?
2. We must put spiritual matters first, Acts 22:16; 1 John 1:9.

Nitwit Religion

Romans 12:16

Thesis: To emphasize the senselessness of attempting to worship God in anyway except how he has specified through the Bible.

Introduction:

1. The word “nitwit” is defined, in part, by the German word “nit” meaning “not” and the English word “wit”; *Merriam-Webster* defines “nitwit” as: “a scatterbrained or stupid person.”
2. “Religion” is defined as “the service and worship of God” (*Merriam-Webster*).
3. While not wanting to be rude, it is important to note that to attempt to worship God in anyway other than what he has specified is senseless or otherwise “not wise,” Rom. 12:16 NKJV.

Body:

- I. **Mankind has opted to worship God in a number of ways that are contrary to what God has specified in the New Testament.**
 - A. Some of the ways in which mankind has chosen to worship God seem stranger than others.
 1. I once heard of a religion where worshippers would write their prayers on paper, make spit wads of them and throw them at a statute of their God; they believed that the ones that stuck to the statute would be answered, Col. 2:23.
 2. A woman once told me that she would shut her eyes, open her Bible at random and point to a verse; she considered whatever verse on which her finger landed to be a personal message from God to her, Matt. 27:5; John 13:27.
 3. Many people are fascinated with the concept of shutting their eyes and seeing a circle of light, through which they suppose that God gives them personal, new revelations that contradict the Bible, Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3.
 4. Certainly, these examples qualify as *nitwit religion*.
 - B. While more familiar to us, the religious practices of many other well meaning people also are contrary to what God has specified in the New Testament.

1. Some popular religions are referred to as cults because they are not *mainstream* or hold doctrines that are not widely accepted and noticeably contradict the Bible, e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc.
2. However, denominationalism opts to worship God in ways contrary to what he has specified in the New Testament, i.e. instrumental music, candles, infrequent observance of the Lord's Supper, special priesthood or clergy, sacraments, preaching human dogma, etc.
3. Realistically, any religion wherein people attempt to worship God through ways he has not specified in the New Testament is *nitwit religion* or "not wise."

II. **Worshipping God is serious business that should not be taken lightly.**

- A. Under Patriarchy, failure to worship God according to his specifications led to tragic results, Gen. 4:3-8; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17.
- B. Under Judaism, failure to worship God according to his specifications led to tragic results, Lev. 10:1-2; Jer. 7:31.
- C. Likewise under Christianity, failure to worship God according to his specifications leads to tragic results.
 1. Jesus called unauthorized worship **vain worship**, Matt. 15:9.
 2. The apostle Paul referred to unauthorized worship as **ignorant worship**, Acts 17:23.

Conclusion:

1. Faithful Christians worship God in spirit and in truth, John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3.
2. Unauthorized worship of God is "will worship" or *nitwit religion*, Col. 2:23.

Invitation:

1. *Nitwit religion* won't save anyone from anything, but obeying the Gospel will rid one's soul of sins, Rom. 6:17.
2. Unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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The Death of a Church

1 Corinthians 15:58

Thesis: To caution Christians about dangers threatening the Lord's church throughout the brotherhood.

Introduction:

1. Ancient and contemporary history reveals that churches of Christ die out.
2. Conscientious Christians will want to do what they can to prevent congregations of the Lord's church from dying (either going out of existence or apostatizing).
3. Let's note some the reasons that congregations die and determine to do what we can to keep the church truly "alive and well."

Body:

I. The Lord's church is dying because it is not being fed—starvation diet!

- A. The Lord's church needs a spiritual diet of the Word of God, 1 Cor. 10:3-4.
 1. According to prophecy, the Messiah began feeding his followers the Word of God, Mic. 5:4.
 2. The apostles were charged to continue this feeding of the "lambs" or "sheep," John 21:15-17.
 3. The apostles Paul and Peter charged elders to feed the "flock," Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3.
- B. Unfortunately, often the Lord's church desires **junk food** instead of a healthy spiritual diet, 2 Tim. 4:3-4.
 1. "Give me positive preaching, not negative preaching," 2 Tim. 4:2.
 2. "Just preach on love and leave everybody alone," John 14:15, 21.
 3. "Don't preach against immodesty, dancing, drinking, marriage and divorce, immoralities, etc.," 1 Tim. 2:9; Gal. 5:21; Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor 6:9-10.
 4. "All you ever preach about is baptism," 1 Pet. 3:21.
 5. "We don't need any sermons on non-issues like on whether instrumental music in worship is acceptable to God, whether the Bible permits us to have fellowship

with denominations, Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 5:11.

II. The Lord's church is dying because it is being poisoned.

- A. The "form of doctrine" that "delivered" us from sin when we obeyed it must be embraced daily throughout our lives, Rom. 6:17.
 - 1. Christians must arm themselves with "sound doctrine," 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1.
 - 2. With the Word of God every teacher and every teaching can be tested to see if it is really the Word of God, Eph. 4:13-14; 1 John 4:1.
- B. Alteration of and substitution for the Word of God poisons men's souls, 2 Cor. 11:3.
 - 1. Paul affirmed that many "corrupt the word of God," 2 Cor. 2:17.
 - 2. "False brethren" are a threat to any congregation, 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4-5.
 - 3. "Enticing words" or "good words and fair speeches" are the tools of false brethren, Col. 2:4; Rom. 16:18.
 - 4. These brethren attempt to change biblical doctrine respecting marriage and divorce, organization of the church, benevolence, cooperation between congregations, etc.

III. The Lord's church is dying because it is being neglected.

- A. Nothing and no one is more important than the Lord's church.
 - 1. Jesus Christ taught that no material consideration in this physical world deserves attention before attention to spiritual matters, Matt. 6:24-34.
 - 2. Jesus Christ taught that no earthly relationship should come before one's commitment to God, Matt. 10:37.
- B. Yet, some Christians (even those who imagine that they are faithful) only give the Lord's church leftover moments of their lives if it is convenient.
 - 1. Christians with minimal conviction have always absented themselves from the assemblies and had to be coaxed to worship God regularly, Heb. 10:25.
 - 2. Think church!—in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening—at all times.

IV. The Lord's church is dying because it's mission has been changed.

- A. The church's threefold, God-given mission is inclusive and exclusive.
 - 1. The Lord's church is the only collection of people on the planet that has the responsibility to **evangelize** the world, Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Thess. 1:8.
 - 2. The Lord's church is the only collection of people on the planet that can adequately **edify** itself, 1 Cor. 14:12, 26; Matt. 28:20.
 - 3. The Lord's church has a non-exclusive responsibility to **be benevolent** toward Christians first and secondly toward non-Christians, as opportunity permits, 2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 6:10.
- B. Members of the Lord's church have altered the God-given mission of the church by subtracting from and the adding to it.
 - 1. Christians often **demote evangelism** to irrelevance in their lives and the life of the church, and then they wonder why the Lord's church does not grow as it has in the past and even decreases in membership, Rev. 2:4.
 - 2. Often, Christians **fail edify** themselves with the Word of God through worship, Bible classes, Gospel meetings, etc. as well as at home, Hos. 4:6.
 - 3. Many times, Christians neglect or outright **refuse to practice benevolence** toward both Christians and non-Christians, Matt. 5:44-48.
 - 4. Christians sometimes covet entertainment and amusements instead of edification with the Gospel alone, Gal. 1:6-9.

V. The Lord's church is dying because it often can no longer recognize what is "doctrinal."

- A. "Doctrine" means "teaching," and the teaching or doctrine about which the Lord's church needs to be concerned is in the New Testament, Acts 2:42.
 - 1. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to instill "doctrine" in the brethren there, 1 Tim. 1:3; 4:6.
 - 2. Christians are supposed to learn divine "doctrine" and

- continue in it, 1 Tim. 4:13, 16.
3. The Word of God (the New Testament) is the source of divine doctrine, 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:2.
- B. Failure to recognize what is “doctrinal” allows sin to go unchallenged in the Lord’s church, and God’s doctrine is “blasphemed,” 1 Tim. 6:1.
1. The Lord’s church seems unaware or unconcerned about the New Testament doctrine concerning **factious persons** and their subsequent division, Titus 3:10 ASV, NKJV.
 2. **Covetousness** is a sin cataloged with other sins for which persons guilty of this will not be allowed in heaven, Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:11; Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 3:3; 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 13:5; 2 Pet. 2:3, 14.
 3. **Slander** is a sin which especially the people of God should not do, and even more especially the children of God ought not to slander or blaspheme each other, Rom. 14:16; Titus 3:2, which is related to ‘backbiting,’ Rom. 1:30.
 4. Anyone not abiding “in the doctrine of Christ” is to be rejected for Christian fellowship, 2 John 9.

Conclusion:

1. The Lord’s church needs to remain steadfast in New Testament doctrine—and practice of that doctrine, 1 Cor. 15:58.
2. Every congregation that does not concern itself with the doctrine of Christ (orthodoxy) and the practice of the same is a dying church, Rev. 3:1.

Invitation:

1. Before a congregation can be alive in Christ, souls must be alive in Christ, Rom. 6:11, 13.
2. Unbaptized believers can put Jesus Christ on in baptism for the forgiveness of their sins, Gal. 3:27; Acts 22:16.
3. Erring Christians can repent and pray for forgiveness of sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Why Do the Churches of Christ Not Use Instrumental Music in Worship?

Colossians 3:16-17

Thesis: To reinforce fundamentals of the Christian faith, especially as they differ from popular religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus **authorizes**, Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:16-17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matt. 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, Jam. 4:12; Heb. 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with “the commandments of men,” false Gospels and the human will on how to worship God, Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
5. One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting worshipful music.

Body:

- I. **The Old Testament and heaven are incorrect places to look for what God has authorized for worshipful music today.**
 - A. The Old Testament has been replaced with the New Testament for people living today.
 1. It has been “done away,” “abolished” and taken out of the way by nailing it to the cross, 2 Cor. 3:6-11; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14.
 2. People living today have been “delivered” from all of the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments, Rom. 7:6-7.
 3. The New Testament is a “better covenant,” Heb. 8:6-7.
 4. Therefore, the Old Testament is an incorrect place to

look for what God has authorized in worship today (including worshipful music).

- B. What may or may not occur in heaven is irrelevant regarding the Christian Age, and often passages about heaven are misrepresented in a vain attempt to justify what God has not authorized for Christian worship.
1. Every soul will be judged at Final Judgment respecting the law of God under which he or she lived—no more and no less, Rev. 20:12-15.
 2. Therefore, supposed references to instruments of music in heaven are meaningless regarding what is authorized in worship of God today, Rev.14:2.
 3. The Book of Revelation is a volume of highly figurative language and symbols, so that mention of “harps” in heaven may not actually refer to instruments of music, Rev. 5:8; 15:2.
 4. Appeals to what may or may not occur in eternity are irrelevant regarding Christian worship today.

II. Singing is the only type of music that God has authorized for use in worship in the Christian Age.

- A. Instrumental music existed in the first century when the church was begun by Christ, and could have been authorized by our Lord for Christian worship, though he did not authorize instrumental music for Christian worship.
1. Near the dawn of man’s habitation of planet earth, Jubal invented “the harp and flute,” Gen. 4:21 NKJV.
 2. King David introduced instruments of music into Jewish worship, 1 Chron. 23:5; 2 Chron. 7:6; 29:26; Amos 6:5.
 3. The Jewish synagogue, after which the New Testament church is patterned, did not use instrumental music in worship:

Instruments were not used in the worship of the ancient synagogue. They belonged to the tabernacle and the Temple, especially the latter; but were never in the congregational assemblies of God’s people. ...No hint is given in Old Testament or New that instruments were ever used in the synagogue worship. (b) Orthodox Jews do not allow the organ or any other instrument in their synagogues. (“Music, Instrumental”)

- B. All worshipful music associated with the Lord’s church in the New Testament is singing without accompaniment by instrumental music, Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Jam. 5:13.
1. A sample of a first century Christian worship assembly identifies singing as the type of worshipful music that had apostolic sanction (authority), 1 Cor. 14:15.
 2. “Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” in first century worshipful music were spoken through singing, and the instrument used to make melody was the “heart,” Eph. 5:19.
 3. “Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” through singing taught one another spiritual truths, Col. 3:16.
 4. The type of music in a first century congregational assembly was singing, Heb. 2:12.
 5. Irrespective of the place, first century worshipful music involved singing “psalms,” Jam. 5:13.

There is no warrant in the New Testament for their use. (a) There is no example of such by Peter, Paul, John, James, or the Master himself, nor by any others in the apostolic age; nor have we any in the first three centuries...(b) We have no command either to make or to use them. ...(c) We find no directions, formal or incidental, for their use; while we have line upon line about singing—what to sing, when to sing, how to sing. (“Music, Instrumental”)

- C. Famous religious leaders throughout history realized that instrumental music is not authorized by the New Testament for Christian worship.
1. The first century church did not use instrumental music in worship because there is no biblical authorization for it.
 2. At first, not even the Catholic Church used instrumental music in worship.

The general introduction of instrumental music can certainly not be assigned to a date earlier than the 5th and 6th centuries; yea, even Gregory the Great, who towards the end of the 6th century added greatly to the existing Church music, absolutely prohibited the use of

instruments. Several centuries later the introduction of the organ in sacred service gave a place to instruments as accompaniments for Christian song, and from that time to this they have been freely used with few exceptions. The first organ is believed to have been used in Church service in the 13th century. (“Music, Christian”)

3. There was a time when denominational churches did not use instrumental music in worship.

Luther called the organ an ensign of Baal; Calvin said that instrumental music was not fitter to be adopted into the Christian Church than the incense and the candlestick; Knox called the organ a kist [chest] of whistles. The Church of England revived them, against a very strong protest, and the English dissenters would not touch them. (“Music, Instrumental”)

4. No one has ever been authorized to add instrumental music to Christian worship!

Conclusion:

1. Anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all in religion.
2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will render to the Almighty worshipful music that he has authorized—singing.

Invitation:

1. Likewise, anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all regarding human salvation; such a person will remain lost.
2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will implement God’s divine plan of salvation in his or her life, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9.

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Why Do the Churches of Christ Observe the Communion Weekly?

Acts 20:7

Thesis: To reinforce fundamentals of the Christian faith, especially as they differ from popular religion.

Song: *The Lord's Supper, The Breaking of Bread*

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus **authorizes**, Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matt. 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, Jam. 4:12; Heb. 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with “the commandments of men,” false Gospels and the human will on how to worship God, Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
5. One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting worship.

Body:

- I. Uninspired contemporary mankind observes the Lord's Supper at various intervals and on various occasions.**
 - A. Catholics observe a corrupted form of the Lord's Supper or Communion everyday, including the first day of every week.
 1. Among deviations from the way the primitive church observed communion, the Catholic Church reserves the fruit of the vine for its priesthood.
 2. Catholics observance the Communion daily, including on the first day of the week, in accordance with the purported authority of the Catholic Church, rather than by appealing to biblical authority.

- B. Various denominations observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week monthly, semiannually, once a year on Easter Sunday or at some other interval on which they arbitrarily decide.
 - 1. Sometimes the reason for the infrequent observance of the Lord's Supper is explained that so weekly observance of the Lord's Supper won't make its observance mundane or commonplace.
 - 2. Such an explanation and practice presumes that either God has not given instruction respecting the frequency of its observance, or that irrespective of his instruction that God does not care if that instruction is ignored.
- C. Sometimes contemporary people remove the observance of the Lord's Supper from a worship assembly and observe it at other occasions, such as a wedding.
 - 1. Try as one might, one cannot find in the New Testament where the Lord's Supper was observed on any other occasion by the primitive church than in its worship on the first day of the week.
 - 2. If the New Testament is to be taken seriously as revelation from God, people living in the Christian Age must discern and practice what it **authorizes**.

II. The New Testament authorizes weekly observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week in Lord's Day worship of the local church.

- A. The Bible **authorizes** practices in one or more of only three ways.
 - 1. The Bible authorizes through **direct statements**, such as commands or statement of information, "**Go** ye into all the **world**, and **preach** the **Gospel** to **every creature**," Mark 16:15.
 - 2. The Bible authorizes through **implication**, from which mankind is obligated to correctly **infer**, Mark 16:15, i.e. mode of travel and manner of communication.
 - 3. The Bible authorizes by **approved example**, or what our legal system calls "precedent," Acts 20:7.

"**2 a** : something done or said that may serve as an example or rule to authorize or justify a subsequent act of the same or an analogous kind" (Merriam-Webster).

- 4. Direct statements, implication and approved example

- are the tools of successful communication irrespective of the setting, e.g. between children, adults and God.
- B. A single verse of Scripture settles the frequency and the occasion God intended for observance of the Lord's Supper, Acts 20:7.
 - 1. Acts 20:7 records an apostolic approved example of observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week by a local church.
 - 2. Since no other passage addresses the frequency of or occasion for observing the Lord's Supper, Acts 20:7 decisively settles those questions: first day of the week in the assembly of the local church for worship.
 - C. The observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week in the assembly of the local church for worship corresponds to the other four acts of worship characteristic of Lord's Day worship.
 - 1. Preaching also occurs on the occasion of observing the Lord's Supper, Acts 20:7.
 - 2. The collection occurs on the first day of the week, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 3. Singing and prayer also occur during assemblies of a local church, including the first day of the week, 1 Cor. 14:15.
 - D. The reason for observing the Lord's Supper does not correspond to other occasions, reasons or days for its observance.
 - 1. The Lord's Supper is observed to remember Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 11:24-25.
 - 2. The Lord's Supper was never intended to be observed apart from other acts of worship and outside of the assembly of the local church on the first day of the week.
 - 3. The Lord's Supper was never intended to make a wedding more special than it should already be.

Conclusion:

- 1. Anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all in religion.
- 2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will render to the Almighty worship that he has authorized.

3. In the case of the Lord's Supper, that means that it will be observed weekly on the first day of the week, along with other biblically authorized acts of worship, by the local church.

Invitation:

1. Likewise, anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all regarding human salvation; such a person will remain lost.
2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will implement God's divine plan of salvation in his or her life, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9.

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Merriam-Webster, I. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1993. CD-ROM. Bellingham: Logos, 1996.

Why Do the Churches of Christ Not Have Female Leaders?

1 Timothy 2:12-14

Thesis: To emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus **authorizes**, Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matt. 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, Jam. 4:12; Heb. 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with “the commandments of men,” false Gospels and the human will, Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
5. One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

Body:

- I. **Manmade religion has improvised regarding several aspects of church leadership—displacing the leadership in religion that God authorized in the New Testament.**
 - A. One way in which mankind has altered religion from the New Testament pattern is by introduction of a formal clergy.
 1. Often this clergy is distinguished from the rest of the church by special clothing for the clergy, e.g. often colorful, flowing robes and headgear.
 2. Companion to special clothing for clergy are special religious titles reserved for clergy, Matt. 23:8-10.
 3. Many denominations have formalized worship with this special clergy beyond what the New Testament

reveals respecting worship under Christianity.

B. Another way in which mankind has altered religion from the New Testament pattern is by introduction of leadership roles for women in the church.

1. For instance, she elders are foreign to what the New Testament authorizes, 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6.
2. In addition, female preachers to audiences of men and women are prohibited by New Testament Scripture, 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:34.
3. The respective roles for men and women in the church and in the home are not culturally based, but go back to near creation and were implemented by God before there was any culture, 1 Tim. 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 11:8-9.

II. The churches of Christ are obligated to implement the type of church leadership that the New Testament authorizes.

A. The churches of Christ are obligated to adhere to what the New Testament authorizes for church leadership.

1. This includes not developing a clergy, and not distinguishing its leaders by special clothing and special titles.
2. Subsequently, formalized worship services, etc. beyond what the New Testament authorizes is ill-conceived.

B. The churches of Christ do not have female leadership in the church because it is not authorized by God.

1. Despite differing God-given roles for men and women in the church and in the home, male and female Christians are spiritually equal, Gal. 3:26-28.
2. There is sufficient work for women to do within the framework of their God-given role, Titus 2:3-5; 1 Tim. 5:14.
3. Since God has restricted women from leadership roles in the church, this places a serious responsibility upon male members of the church, 1 Tim. 2:8.

Conclusion:

1. Anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all in religion.
2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will concern themselves with what Almighty God has authorized.

3. In the case of church leadership, that means that the local church will be led by godly men, and that the church will have neither a clergy nor female leaders.

Invitation:

1. Likewise, anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all regarding human salvation; such a person will remain lost.
2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will implement God's divine plan of salvation in his or her life, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9.

Why Do the Churches of Christ Not Fellowship Denominations?

2 John 9-11

Thesis: To emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus **authorizes**, Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matt. 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, Jam. 4:12; Heb. 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with “the commandments of men,” false Gospels and the human will, Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
5. One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

Body:

- I. **There were no denominations in the first century to which the churches of Christ could have extended fellowship.**
 - A. Catholic and Protestant churches did not appear in history until several hundred years after the establishment of our Lord’s church.
 1. Departures from primitive Christianity began in the first century, some of which doctrinal errors appear in the New Testament.
 2. The Roman Catholic Church did not have a universally accepted pope until Boniface III in 606.
 3. The Protestant Reformation Movement began in 1517 when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the church

- door in Wittenberg, Germany.
- B. Jesus Christ established only one church over which he is the Head, and for which he will return someday.
 - 1. First, Jesus only promised to build one church, which belongs to him, Matt. 16:18.
 - 2. Jesus Christ is the only Head of his church, Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18.
 - 3. Jesus Christ is coming again to retrieve his church, John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:1.
 - C. The churches of Christ (i.e. church of God, 1 Cor. 1:2) are warned not to participate in religious division.
 - 1. The apostle Paul condemned religious division within a congregation, which principle also forbids participation in religious division (denominationalism) outside of a congregation, 1 Cor. 1:10-13.
 - 2. Christians are forbidden to participate with or fellowship anyone who does not continue in the doctrine of Jesus Christ, 2 John 9-11.
 - 3. Instead of fellowshipping the doctrinally errant, faithful Christians are supposed to expose them, Eph. 5:11 NKJV.

II. Each congregation of the churches of Christ is independent.

- A. No denominational headquarters with its organizational structure existed in the first century.
 - 1. There was no church government in the first century larger than each individual congregation.
 - 2. Each fully organized local congregation had its own elders who guided only the congregation over which they had been appointed, Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:2.
- B. Churches of Christ fellowship each other based on their common regard for the authority of the Scriptures.
 - 1. True Christian fellowship exists between Christians and God plus between Christians and other Christians (all of whom have fellowship with God), 1 John 1:3.
 - 2. Lacking the prerequisite of fellowship with God and abiding in the doctrine of Christ, denominations are not suitable candidates for fellowship with the churches of Christ.
- C. Denominations disregard the authority of the Scriptures in a

number of ways, which makes it impossible for the churches of Christ to fellowship them.

1. Denominations usually wear religious names different from the descriptive terms applied to the Lord's church in the New Testament, e.g. Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, Latter Day Saints, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Presbyterians, Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, etc.
2. Denominations depart from New Testament worship by adding or subtracting according to their preferences, e.g. instrumental music, candles, incense, deviations respecting the Lord's Supper, etc.
3. Denominations disregard the authority of the Scriptures by altering doctrine, e.g. salvation, leadership and church government, morality, etc.

Conclusion:

1. Remember, one must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized.
2. Hence, we conclude that Jesus Christ will not be returning to retrieve churches that he did not establish and over which he is not the Head.
3. Further, Christians cannot fellowship anyone who does not continue in the doctrine of Christ, but rather they are to expose them.
4. The churches of Christ do not fellowship denominations because they are **not authorized** to fellowship them.

Invitation:

1. Also concerning salvation, one must turn to the New Testament exclusively to learn what God has authorized.
2. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers need to be baptized to be saved, 1 Pet. 3:21.

Why Do the Churches of Christ Emphasize Baptism?

1 Peter 3:20–21

Thesis: To emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus **authorizes**, Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matt. 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, Jam. 4:12; Heb. 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with “the commandments of men,” false Gospels and the human will, Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
5. One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

Body:

- I. **The churches of Christ are obligated to emphasize exactly what the New Testament teaches.**
 - A. The churches of Christ are obligated to adhere to what the New Testament teaches regarding every divine doctrine.
 1. Consequently, the churches of Christ teach what the New Testament teaches about **Christian worship**.
 2. The churches of Christ teach what the New Testament teaches about **Christian living**.
 3. The churches of Christ teach what the New Testament teaches about **Christian service**.
 4. Therefore, the churches of Christ teach what the New Testament teaches about **salvation**.
 - B. The New Testament consistently teaches that baptism is the **point at which** one’s sins are removed.

1. Jesus taught the faith and baptism results in salvation, Mark 16:16.
 2. The apostle Peter taught that through repentance and baptism one's sins are remitted, Acts 2:38.
 3. The apostle Paul observed regarding his own salvation that his sins were washed away in baptism, Acts 22:16.
 4. The apostle Peter wrote that baptism saves, 1 Pet. 3:21.
- C. Of course, though baptism is the point at which one's sins are taken away, other things also affect one's salvation.
1. God's **grace** and **mercy** toward obedient souls affect salvation, Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5; Heb. 5:8-9.
 2. The **blood** of Jesus makes salvation possible, Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 1:5.
 3. Preceding baptism, a person must have Bible faith, repent of sins and acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, Heb. 11:6; Luke 13:3; Acts 8:37.

II. Part of emphasizing baptism has to do with identifying biblically what it is, as well as showing what it is not.

- A. The world around us has taken upon itself the redefinition of baptism.
1. Some denominations dispense with baptism altogether.
 2. Some denominations relegate baptism to an optional activity, except that something called baptism may be required to join some denominations.
 3. Many religious people have decided that any of a number of different actions constitute baptism, e.g. sprinkling or pouring water or being immersed in water.
- B. The churches of Christ are obligated to define baptism the way in which the New Testament defines baptism.
1. Not only does Bible baptism save one's soul (1 Pet. 3:21), the Greek words for baptism and baptize mean to dip, immerse or plunge (any Greek lexicon [dictionary] will so indicate).
 2. Biblically, baptism is called a burial or a planting, Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.
 3. Consequently, biblical baptism involves going down into and coming up out of a water source, Acts 8:38-39.
 4. Therefore, when John the Baptist baptized in the

Jordan River, he did so at a location where there was “much water,” John 3:23.

Conclusion:

1. The churches of Christ emphasize baptism because the New Testament emphasizes baptism.
2. The churches of Christ emphasize baptism because the New Testament teaches that baptism is the point at which (after faith, repentance and acknowledging Jesus Christ) that one’s sins are taken away.
3. The churches of Christ emphasize that Bible baptism is immersion because many denominations either have dispensed with baptism or changed it into sprinkling or pouring water over a person.
4. The churches of Christ emphasize baptism because rather than being an optional activity or the way one joins a denomination, Bible baptism is the point at which one’s sins are taken away.

Invitation:

1. The churches of Christ realize that they are duty bound to preach and teach the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:27.
2. Baptism of penitent souls is merely a part of the whole counsel of God, Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Why Do the Churches of Christ Rely on Freewill Giving?

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Thesis: To emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus **authorizes**, Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matt. 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, Jam. 4:12; Heb. 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with “the commandments of men,” and the apostle Paul likewise condemned false Gospels and the human will (substituted for divine will), Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
5. One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

Body:

- I. The contemporary religious world funds itself in a variety of ways.**
 - A. The manner in which the religious world funds itself is entirely owing to preferences of the human will.
 1. Gambling is one popular way that some denominational churches finance their religious activities, e.g. bingo, raffles.
 2. Food sales is another popular way that some manmade churches fund themselves, e.g. pancake suppers, steak dinners, bake sales, etc.
 3. Car washes, carnivals and various sales help fund some

churches.

4. Some churches rely on commercial enterprises to raise money, e.g. investments in sugar or insurance, owning distilleries and bottling companies, operating tourist attractions, etc.
 5. In addition, most contemporary churches adopt tithing from the Old Testament as a part of how they finance themselves, but the Old Testament is no longer the religious law governing mankind, and tithing has not been reinstated in the New Testament, Rom. 7:6-7; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14.
- B. Contemporary religions completely ignore the divine will respecting the funding of religious activity.
1. If contemporary churches were interested in seeking biblical authority for the way they finance themselves, they would not raise money in any of the ways just mentioned.
 2. However, if contemporary churches were truly interested in biblical authority, they would not wear names and adopt doctrines, etc. that are foreign to the Bible.
 3. Clearly, few in the religious world make the least pretensions of interest in biblical authority for the way they conduct themselves.

II. The churches of Christ, though, are obligated to follow the divine will for funding religious activity.

- A. There are a number of religious activities indicated in the New Testament that may require the church to spend money.
1. The New Testament authorizes the Lord's church to financially support preachers of the Gospel, 1 Cor. 9:4-14, **direct statement**.
 2. The New Testament authorizes the Lord's church to financially support elders, 1 Tim. 5:17-18, **direct statement**.
 3. The New Testament authorizes the Lord's church to financially support widows who have no other recourse for their livelihood, 1 Tim. 5:3-16, **direct statement**.
 4. The New Testament authorizes the Lord's church to financially support evangelism in its own community or other communities, 2 Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:14-16,

- direct statement.**
5. The New Testament authorizes the Lord's church to financially provide for its own edification, 1 Cor. 14:12, 26, **divine implication.**
 6. The New Testament authorizes the Lord's church to financially assist Christians and non-Christians who need benevolent relief, Gal. 6:10; 2 Cor. 9:13; Matt. 5:43-48, **direct statement.**
 7. Anything not specifically stated in the New Testament, not a part of evangelism, edification or benevolence and not otherwise authorized by direct statements, approved examples or divine implication is not something on which the Lord's money may be spent.
- B. Freewill giving is the only means authorized in the New Testament for funding religious activity.
1. In addition, only the religious activity authorized in the New Testament for the church to perform can avail itself of the money collected by the Lord's church.
 2. Any activity that does not relate to one of the three missions of the Lord's church or that is not otherwise specified in the New Testament is not an appropriate expenditure for church funds.
 3. Generally, the Lord's church requires funds for evangelism, edification and benevolence, Mark 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 11:8; 1 Cor. 14:12, 26; Gal. 6:10; 2 Cor. 9:13; Matt. 5:43-48.
- C. There are two related ways in which Christians are **authorized** to practice freewill giving.
1. The **primary** New Testament prescription for funding the Lord's church is weekly freewill giving on the Lord's Day as a part of worship, 1 Cor. 16:1-2, a **command.**
 2. Freewill offering is characterized by purposeful giving according to one's prosperity or commensurate with one's resources, 2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Cor. 16:2.
 3. An **additional** New Testament prescription for funding the Lord's church is through spontaneous freewill giving, Acts 4:34-37, an **example.**
 4. There is no stipulation in Scripture that the freewill giving of Acts 4-5 was during Lord's Day worship, in

view of the coming and going of Christians as well as presenting the money to the apostles in Acts 5:1-10.

Conclusion:

1. Since the churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, they are obligated to finance themselves only in the way the New Testament authorizes.
2. Further, the churches of Christ may only spend money on things that are authorized in the New Testament, i.e. through direct statements, approved examples and divine implication.
3. No church is authorized to fund religious activities through any means other than freewill giving.
4. Further, no church is authorized to spend money on things not indicated in Scripture.
5. Incidentally, many churches exist in direct opposition to what God through the New Testament has authorized in virtually every aspect of Christianity.

Invitation:

1. Penitent souls also must turn exclusively to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting human redemption.
2. Unbaptized believers need to be baptized for the remission of their sins, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Why Do the Churches of Christ Not Vote on Doctrine?

Colossians 3:17

Thesis: To emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus **authorizes**, Rom. 16:16; Col. 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matt. 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, Jam. 4:12; Heb. 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with “the commandments of men,” and the apostle Paul condemns false Gospels and the human will (when substituted for divine will), Matt. 15:9; Gal. 1:6-9; Col. 2:23.
5. One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

Body:

I. Contemporary churches routinely vote on religious doctrine.

- A. Catholic and Protestant doctrine has evolved over the centuries.
 1. Catholic doctrine slowly developed over several hundred years, e.g. holy water, 1009; priestly celibacy, 1079; indulgences, 1190; transubstantiation and auricular confession, 1215; purgatory, 1439; Mass in Latin only, 1546; immaculate conception of the virgin Mary, 1854; papal infallibility, 1870; etc.
 2. Further crafting of doctrine among Protestants has resulted in crystallizing numerous denominational

- churches, i.e. hundreds of denominations and thousands of subgroups within those denominations.
- B. Especially denominational doctrine continues to change in our time.
 - 1. Denominational doctrines have changed within our lifetimes, e.g. before 1910 Methodist babies were born in sin; meatless Fridays resulted from the Catholic doctrine of not eating meat on Fridays, though that doctrine is no longer practiced; some living today can remember when virtually no church had female preachers, elders and deacons, etc.
 - 2. Many contemporary denominations are troubled over and bring to a vote whether homosexuality is sinful, whether the so-called clergy can be homosexual, etc.
 - C. Who gave any church the right or privilege of voting on what religious doctrine should be?
 - 1. No one!
 - 2. Certainly God did not authorize mankind to craft and ratify religious doctrine, Matt. 15:9.

II. The churches of Christ are obligated to discern and practice only the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

- A. The New Testament makes it clear that no doctrine other than the doctrine of Jesus Christ is acceptable, 2 John 9-11.
 - 1. God has never allowed mankind to craft religious doctrine, Gen. 4:1-8; Heb. 11:4; Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19.
 - 2. Today, anything but the doctrine of Christ is evil, 2 John 11.
- B. Neither the churches of Christ nor any man or church has been given the right or privilege of crafting and adopting manmade doctrines.
 - 1. Mankind has never been permitted to walk in his own doctrines, Jer. 6:16; 7:23-24; Mal. 4:4; Col. 2:6; Prov. 14:12.
 - 2. In the Christian Age, everyone is obligated to abide by the authority of Jesus Christ, Col. 3:17; John 12:48.
- C. New Testament doctrine was settled in the first century when inspired men penned the New Testament books, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 2:1.
 - 1. No one has to wonder about God's doctrine because it

is available for inspection and study in the written Word of God, Eph. 4:11-14.

2. For instance, homosexuality is a sin that will keep those guilty of that sin out of heaven, 1 Cor. 6:9-10 NKJV.
3. No one has to wonder about divine doctrine respecting marriage-divorce and remarriage, Matt. 19:9; fornication, drunkenness, 1 Cor. 6:9-10 or even lying, Rev. 21:8; etc.

Conclusion:

1. Presuming to vote on religious doctrine is an insult to God.
2. No number of votes in favor of something that God through the Bible God has disallowed can prevail against the decision of God.
3. It behooves mankind to recognize God's Word as authoritative and abide by it, 1 Thess. 2:13.

Invitation:

1. Likewise, it is the height of foolishness for mankind to presume to craft a plan of redemption and further presume that God will abide by it; mankind needs a **reality check** in the worst way!
2. Unbaptized believers need to follow the instruction of Jesus, Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians need to follow the instruction of the apostle Peter, Acts 8:22.

God Will Judge

Matthew 7:1-5

Thesis: The Great God of the Universe will sit in Final Judgment upon humanity, and with no one else's judgment should we be either troubled or content.

Introduction:

1. One of the subjects that Jesus addressed during his personal ministry was unrighteous or hypocritical judgment, Matt. 7:1-5.
 - a. People are mistaken and misconstrue the teaching of Jesus when they suppose that Jesus disallowed all types of judgment that man might make respecting his fellow man, Matt. 7:1, 15-20; 1 Cor. 5:11-12.
 - b. People have the responsibility to "judge...what is right," Luke 12:57; John 7:24.
2. However, no man has the right to pass **Final Judgment** upon his fellow man, even if one correctly discerns from biblical evidence that a person will be lost if he or she enters eternity without repenting, Rom. 14:10, 13; 1 Cor. 4:3-5.
 - a. Unlike the common practice among denominational preachers, Gospel preachers do not preach anyone into either heaven (or hell) through funeral sermons.
 - b. God's Lawgiver will correctly pass **Final Judgment** according to divine law, Jam. 4:11-12; Rev. 20:12-15.
3. I'm thankful that God will judge me rather than my enemies, friends or myself, Heb. 12:23.

Body:

- I. **I'm thankful that my enemies will not judge me respecting where I spend eternity.**
 - A. Enemies have a tendency to judge too hard and with no mercy.
 1. Jesus taught that one must be willing to extend mercy to receive mercy from God, Matt. 5:7.
 2. James echoes Jesus that one's judgments must be tempered with mercy for one to receive mercy for himself, Jam. 2:13.
 3. Furthermore, enemies often judge with hypocritical

judgment, faulting others for what they also do themselves, Rom. 2:1.

- B. Unlike one's enemies, our God is a God of mercy, Jam. 5:11.
 - 1. Through God's mercy is salvation made possible, Titus 3:5.
 - 2. The Christian hope for eternity rests firmly on the mercy of God, 1 Pet. 1:3-4.

II. I'm thankful that my friends will not judge me respecting where I spend eternity.

- A. Friends have a tendency to judge too easy with too much mercy.
 - 1. Friends would even die for each other, John 15:13.
 - 2. Friends arise to stand with each other in the face of adversity, Prov. 17:17.
 - 3. True friends are closer than brothers, Prov. 18:24.
 - 4. Friends may overlook shortcomings or sins that one must correct to spend forever with God in heaven, Prov. 27:6, 17.
- B. Becoming and remaining a friend of God will prepare one for eternity, Jam. 2:23.
 - 1. Many, though, become the friends of the world and the enemy of God, Jam. 4:4.
 - 2. We must rather become the friends of God by doing his will, John 15:14.

III. I'm thankful that I will not judge myself respecting where I spend eternity.

- A. People have a tendency to judge themselves too hard with too little mercy.
 - 1. Jesus told of a tax collector who as he worshipped petitioned God for mercy because he was a sinner, Luke 18:13.
 - 2. The apostle Paul never forgot how he had persecuted the church, 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15.
- B. Or, people have a tendency to judge themselves too lightly with too much mercy.
 - 1. Jesus told of a Pharisee who in supposed worship of God extended too much mercy toward himself and critical judgment toward his fellow man, Luke 18:11-12.
 - 2. Children of God must practice righteousness and

mercy to obtain divine mercy, Prov. 21:21; Luke 6:36; Col. 3:12-13.

IV. God will judge fairly with the right amount of mercy.

- A. God will judge with vengeance disobedient souls, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 - 1. The vengeance of God will even ungodly Christians, Heb. 10:30.
 - 2. God will judge mankind at the Final Judgment according to Holy Scripture, Rev. 20:12-15.
- B. God will use the right amount of mercy in Final Judgment.
 - 1. God is a God of mercy, Exod. 33:19; Rom. 9:15.
 - 2. God is described as the “Father of mercies,” “rich in mercy,” “tender mercy” and “abundant mercy,” 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 2:4; Jam. 5:11; 1 Pet. 1:3.
 - 3. God is merciful to the unrighteousness of the obedient, Heb. 8:12; 5:8-9.

Conclusion:

- 1. I’m thankful that God will judge me rather than my enemies, friends or myself.
- 2. I’m delighted, though, that God will judge me with righteous judgment tempered with mercy.

Invitation:

- 1. Mankind dare not attempt to conceal sins, but every accountable soul must acknowledge his sins to obtain the mercy of God, Prov. 28:13.
- 2. Unbaptized believers need to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38.
- 3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray, Acts 8:22.

Focused on the Future

John 9:4

Thesis: To encourage Christians to focus on the future with hope.

Introduction:

1. Hope toward the future is fundamental to one's existence.
 - a. Everyone hopes for a brighter tomorrow or a more promising new year, Rom. 8:24-25.
 - b. However, for the Christian, hope toward the future includes contemplation of spending eternity with God in heaven, 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 2 Pet. 3:13-14; Titus 1:2.
2. Usually in the physical world and certainly respecting spiritual matters, hope toward one's future must be accompanied by human involvement in helping to bring about the desired future.
 - a. The New Testament contains several exhortations to work for the Lord, 1 Cor. 15:58.
 - b. Christians need work for God as Jesus worked for his Father, John 4:34.
3. There is an urgency with which one must attend to spiritual labors, John 9:4.
 - a. God's worker must use each present moment as though making up for wasted moments in the past, Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5.
 - b. There will come a time when it will be too late to work for God, Ecc. 9:10.
4. God's worker must not cease his labors due to fatigue or any other reasons, Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13.
 - a. God's worker is always desirous of opportunities to labor for God, Titus 2:14; 3:1.
 - b. God's worker labors without direct supervision, Gal. 4:18.
5. God's workers' labors are apparent to observers in this world, Phil. 2:15-16.
 - a. The zeal evident in God's worker encourages others to have zeal in labors for God, 2 Cor. 9:2.
 - b. God's workers work with the souls of their fellow mankind, Matt. 5:14-16.
6. Each child of God must focus on and have hope toward the future.

Body:

I. Elders must be focused on the future.

- A. Elders have the gravest and greatest responsibility on earth.
 - 1. They must give an account for the souls of other men and women, Heb. 13:17.
 - 2. Elders or shepherds must one day face the Chief Shepherd, 1 Pet. 5:1-4.
- B. Elders are charged with the oversight and feeding the church of God, Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.
- C. Elders must lead by purity of life and defense of the Gospel, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
- D. Elders must also lead the church with regard to its focus on the future.
 - 1. A church whose elders have no focus on the future will not have a focus on the future either.
 - 2. Elders must focus on the future respecting the spiritual and numerical growth of the congregation they serve.
 - 3. Churches that have no active goals for the future are stagnant, displeasing to God and will eventually shrivel up and die.

II. Deacons must be focused on the future.

- A. Deacons are general servants of the church under the direction of elders.
 - 1. Deacons must be faithfully qualified to serve, 1 Tim. 3:8-13.
 - 2. Deacons are largely responsible for the day-to-day fulfillment of church work related to the future of the church.
- B. Deacons must share the vision their elders have for the future.
 - 1. Without sharing the vision of the elders, deacons are at a disadvantage in fulfilling their responsibilities as deacons.
 - 2. Deacons must desire and work toward the fulfillment of the congregation's divine mission now and in the future.

III. Preachers must be focused on the future.

- A. The qualifications and responsibilities of preachers largely appear in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.
 - 1. Preachers serve the church, specifically the

- congregations with which they regularly labor.
 - 2. Preachers are also under the oversight of elders.
 - 3. It is important that preachers share the vision of the elders for the future.
- B. The nature of a preacher's work is extensively visionary.
 - 1. A preacher must expect and desire the church with which he labors to grow spiritually and numerically.
 - 2. A preacher can hardly encourage other members satisfactorily unless he genuinely harbors hope (expectation and desire) that the church with which he labors has the potential to grow.
 - 3. A preacher without hope or vision toward future growth of the congregation with which he labors in the Gospel has no business in that pulpit.
 - 4. God's preacher is convinced that faithfully sowing the Word of God will result in spiritual and numerical growth, Isa. 55:11.

IV. Congregations must be focused on the future.

- A. Every congregation is obligated to follow godly elders, Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4.
- B. A congregation must share its elders' vision for the future of the church.
 - 1. The visionary goals of elders for the future of a congregation are unattainable without the complete cooperation of the church.
 - 2. A congregation must hope (desire and expect) spiritual and numerical growth.
- C. Congregational indifference will destroy visions and goals for the future of a church.
 - 1. Lacking vision for the future is terminal to growth and maybe the existence of any congregation.
 - 2. The church must reach for tomorrow respecting the three-fold mission of the church, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 14:12; Gal. 6:10.

Conclusion:

- 1. God's people must focus on the future to effectively be apart of that future in a meaningful way.
- 2. That focus on the future must pertain to the mission of the church.
- 3. God's people need to share the vision and goals of elders, who themselves must entertain congregational goals for the church.

4. Goals for the distant future begin with goals for the immediate future.

Invitation:

1. Everyone needs to focus on the future respecting approaching eternity.
2. A correct focus on the future for a non-Christian begins by becoming a Christian, Mark 16:15-16.
3. A correct focus on the future for erring Christians begins with repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22.

Where There Is No Vision

Proverbs 29:18

Thesis: To emphasize the essentiality of relying on God's Word for instruction in religion.

Song: *Give Me the Bible*

Introduction:

1. The word "vision" in Proverbs 29:18 refers to prophetic instruction from God.
 - a. The Hebrew word for "vision" "Chazon almost always signifies a means of divine revelation" (*Vine's*).
 - b. "This famous verse has often been misquoted because the word vision has taken on new meaning since A.D. 1611 AD. The Hebrew (and originally the AV) means 'where there is no prophetic vision, the people perish'" (*Wycliffe*).
 - c. Consequently, Clarke restated the meaning of Proverbs 29:18: "Where divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither revered nor attended, the ruin of that land is at no great distance" (*Clarke's*).
 - d. Likewise, Barnes conveys the correct understanding of the word "vision": "The word commonly used of the revelation of God's will made to prophets. Compare Isa 1:1; Nah 1:1...1 Sam. 3:1" (*Barnes'*).
2. The significance of the proverb can hardly be misunderstood when the word "vision" is properly defined.
 - a. "Where there is no setting forth of the will of God, whether by special revelation, as in old times...or by the ordinary ministrations of God's ministers and God's Word, as now, 'the people perish.'" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).
 - b. Matthew Henry comments on the cause and effect within Proverbs 29:18: "How bare does a place look without Bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls!" (*Matthew*).
 - c. Further causal relationship is apparent in the following statement: "When there was not prophet to reveal God's will to the people or no preacher to hinder their going into sin, people get into sin with nothing to restrain them" (Hunt 400).

- d. Hugo McCord noted: “Where there is no revelation from God, the people cast off restraint. Rejecting God and His Word, the people had nothing and nobody to hold them back” (qtd. in Liddell 329-330). (Cf. Prov. 29:18 ASV, NKJV.)
3. Proverbs 29:18 emphasizes the essentiality of relying on God’s Word for instruction in religion.
 - a. This was true under **Patriarchy**, as God’s dealings with Adam and Eve, as well as Cain, clearly teach, Gen. 3; 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17.
 - b. This was true under **Judaism** also, as God’s dealings with Nadab and Abihu clearly teach, Lev. 10:1-2.
 - c. This is true under **Christianity** too, as the New Testament clearly teaches, John 12:48.

Body:

- I. **God has always required humanity to obey his revelation or perish through divine punishment.**
 - A. The Bible abounds with passages that warn humanity to obey divine revelation, 2 Pet. 1:21; 3:2.
 1. A routine divine warning dots the Bible from cover to cover, Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19.
 2. A whole generation of Israelites perished in the wilderness after Judaism was inaugurated and before the nation reach Canaan, Num. 14:29-33; Heb. 3:17.
 3. Disobeying divine revelation cost Israel of old its home in Canaan, Josh. 23:16; 722 B.C.; 586 B.C.
 4. As a group, God turned Israel out and turned to the Gentiles, Rom. 10:21-11:25.
 - B. There were 400 years of silence (no prophetic vision or revelation) between the testaments as well as other times when the revelation of God was unavailable to humanity, Amos 8:11-12.
 1. The Jews even lost the Word of God so that it had to be rediscovered right where they lost it—in the Temple, 2 Kings 22:8-13.
 2. Most of the time it was not the case that God’s revelation was not available, but that people (even God’s people) simply were not interested in God’s vision or revelation, Hos. 4:6.
 3. The same is true, unfortunately, today as well!
 - C. The Old Testament is no longer the law of God to which

people living today must turn for instruction in religion.

1. Patriarchy was replaced (at least for the Jews) with Judaism at Mt. Sinai with the giving of the Ten Commandments, Exod. 34:28-29; Deut. 4:12-14.
2. Judaism for the Jews (and Patriarchy for the Gentiles) was replaced with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:6-7.
3. Everyone living today must turn exclusively to the New Testament for divine instruction,

II. God still demands humanity obey his revelation or perish through divine punishment.

- A. First century Christians were warned often not to deviate from divine revelation.
 1. The apostle Paul warned a group of congregations in the sub Roman province of Galatia not to accept a defective Gospel, Gal. 1:6-9.
 2. The apostle John warn Christians in the first century against any deviations of “the doctrine of Christ,” 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11.
 3. Jesus Christ himself repeatedly warned people in his generation not to alter the Word of God, Rev. 22:18-19.
- B. Deviations from primitive Christianity are so abundant that we hardly give them any consideration.
 1. Whenever people actually practice what the New Testament teaches, the practice of primitive Christianity is what the public views with suspicion instead of the deviations from the New Testament.
 2. Yet, Jesus Christ made it clear the divine disdain toward those who deviate from divinely given religion, Matt. 15:9, 13.
- C. Deviations from New Testament Christianity are many and include:
 1. Biblically unauthorized names and titles, Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; Acts 11:26; Matt. 23:8-10.
 2. Biblically unauthorized church organization and government, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:28.
 3. Biblically unauthorized worship, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19.
 4. Biblically unauthorized missions, Mark 16:15-16; 1

Cor. 14:12; Gal. 6:10.

5. Biblically unauthorized doctrines, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Col. 3:17.
- D. Souls who do not obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ will suffer the punishment of Jesus Christ
1. Those who never obey the Gospel will meet a punishing Christ at his Second Coming, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 2. Disobedient Christians will know the wrath of a vengeful God, Heb. 10:26-31.
 3. Humanity living today will be judged by the Gospel, Rom. 2:16.

Conclusion:

1. It is so sad that deviations from primitive Christianity are so abundant that we hardly give them any consideration.
2. Isn't it simply amazing that whenever people actually practice what the New Testament teaches, the practice of primitive Christianity is what the public views with suspicion instead of the deviations from the New Testament.
3. Proverbs 29:18 compares to New Testament verses, Luke 11:28; Jam. 1:25.

Invitation:

1. People in any age were and are only blessed spiritually when they heed divine commandments, Rev. 22:14.
2. Will any soul be blessed spiritually for ignoring the divine plan of redemption appearing on the pages of the New Testament, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37-39?
3. Will any Christian be blessed spiritually for crucifying Christ afresh, Heb. 6:6?

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The Devil's Lies

John 8:44

Thesis: To encourage thoughtful souls to ignore religious lies that will damn the soul and turn to the New Testament for reliable religious instruction.

Introduction:

1. The devil shares a responsibility for and delights in misguiding humans.
2. Satan's first and consistent sin toward humanity has been deception (i.e. lying), Gen. 3:4-5; 2 Cor. 11:3; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 12:9; 20:10.
3. Satan and his servants also appear to be what they are not, 2 Cor. 11:13-15.
4. Consequently, Satan and his servants have and continue to mislead innumerable souls in such a way that multitudes will lose their souls.
5. Let's consider some of the devil's lies.

Body:

I. The devil's lies are many.

- A. The devil says that one church is just as good as another.
 1. However, the Lord's church is the body of the saved, Acts 2:47.
 2. The Lord's church is the church of Christ or the church of God (indicating possession), Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 1:2.
 3. There is only one church built by Jesus, for which he died to establish, over which he is the head and for which he will return someday, Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
- B. The devil says that being a good moral person is enough to go to heaven.
 1. Cornelius was a good moral person, but he needed to be baptized, Acts 10:1-2, 48.
 2. In truth, people who have an immoral past can be saved, too, 1 Cor. 6:9-11.
- C. The devil tries to convince people that there is no God

(atheism).

1. The Bible portrays anyone who does not believe in God as a “fool,” Psa. 14:1; 53:1.
 2. Mankind once knew there is a God and the created universe should remind man that there is a God, Rom. 1:20-21, 28.
- D. The devil says that there is no hell.
1. The “no hell” doctrine is comforting to people who have not made preparation for eternity and want pursue the pleasures of sin for a season, Heb. 11:25.
 2. The New Testament clearly and regularly declares there is an eternal hell, Matt. 25:41.
- E. The devil says that “faith only” saves, but inspired, New Testament penmen said the opposite, Mark 16:16; Jam. 2:24.
- F. The devil says that a person only has to be sincere to be saved, though Jesus taught that sincerity must be coupled with truth, John 4:23-24.
- G. The devil says that hedonism and materialism bring true happiness.
1. Pleasure is short-lived, and sinful pleasures precede “slaughter,” Job 20:5; Isa. 47:8-9; Heb. 11:25; Jam. 5:5.
 2. Trusting in pleasure will be turned into fear, Isa. 21:4.
 3. The rich man trusted in material prosperity instead of God, and he regretted it, Luke 12:19-20; 16:25.
 4. Wealth in which one may trust for a lifetime swiftly vanishes at death, Job 21:13.
- H. The devil says that those who never hear about Jesus Christ will not be lost.
1. The reason that Jesus came into the world to die on the cross was because mankind is already lost, 1 John 3:5.
 2. Not obeying the Gospel only magnifies one’s sins, John 3:16-18.
- I. The devil says don’t worry how you live your life because you will have a second chance after death, e.g. purgatory, reincarnation.
1. The Bible knows nothing of second chance religion, Luke 16:19-31.
 2. Death occurs but once, after which Judgment occurs, Heb. 9:27.

II. Only by appealing to the Word of God can one know truth from lie.

- A. The very purpose of the written Word of God is to guard against religious error, Eph. 4:11-14.
- B. Studying the Word of God will enable one to discern between the devil's lies and biblical truth.
 - 1. The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to study, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - 2. Jews at Berea were "noble" because they studied the Scriptures, Acts 17:11.
 - 3. Without studying the Scriptures regularly, one cannot adequately discern between right and wrong, Heb. 5:14.
- C. God expects mankind to inspect what they are taught to confirm that it is the Word of God.
 - 1. Teachers and preachers must be tested with the Word of God, 1 John 4:1.
 - 2. No false gospels are allowed a place among the people of God, Gal. 1:6-9.
 - 3. False teachers and their false teachings must be rejected, 2 John 9-11.
- D. God also expects mankind to inspect himself periodically with the Word of God to discern if he is biblically correct, 2 Cor. 13:5.

Conclusion:

- 1. The devil's lies are much more numerous than those we have briefly noted here.
- 2. Only through the Word of God (for us the New Testament) can we adequately discern between the devil's lies and Bible truth.

Invitation:

- 1. In all things, but especially regarding human redemption, mankind must appeal to God's Word to discern between the devil's lies and divine truth.
- 2. Jesus taught that Bible faith followed by Bible baptism saves, Mark 16:16; cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21.
- 3. Erring Christians can have their sins remitted through penitence and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

When to Pray

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

Thesis: To encourage Christians to increase the frequency of prayers in their lives by suggesting opportunities in life that lend themselves to prayer.

Song: *Did You Think to Pray?, Sweet Hour of Prayer*

Introduction:

1. Some form of the English word “pray” appears 545 times in the Bible (besides references to prayer that may use other words, e.g. “ask”).
 - a. Of those, 174 instances appear in the New Testament.
 - b. Of these, 88 come from the Greek verb *proseuchomai* (pros-yoo'-khom-ah-ee), including in 1 Thess. 5:17, and 37 come from the Greek noun *proseuche* (pros-yoo-khay').
 - c. These two related words, a verb and a noun, represent the most frequent Greek word for prayer in the New Testament, and they represent what we usually mean when we use the words “pray” and “prayer.”
 - d. To pray and prayer in these references pertains to mankind communicating to Almighty God.
2. Prayer may take many forms: **adoration** or **praise**, **thanksgiving**, 1 Thess. 5:18; and **petitions**.
3. Students of God’s Word may and should study numerous aspects of prayer.
4. The whole nature of prayer embraces acknowledgement that God through his **providence** can and desires to respond to prayers offered according to his will, 1 John 5:14-15.
5. The question with which we concern ourselves today is “**when**” should we pray.

Body:

I. When did Jesus resort to prayer?

A. Jesus’ life was a life of prayer.

1. Pray by our Lord during his ministry was so frequent that it could not be easily overlooked.

None prayed so often as Jesus; early in the morning “a great while before day” (Mark 1:35), “all the night”

(Luke 6:12), in Gethsemane with an “agony” that drew from Him “sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:44); “when He was being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened” (Luke 3:21); “as He prayed” He was transfigured (Luke 9:29); “as He was praying in a certain place” (Luke 11:1) one disciple struck by His prayer said, “Lord teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples” (an interesting fact here only recorded). Above all, the intercession in John 17, His beginning of advocacy with the Father for us; an example of the highest and holiest spiritual communion. (*Fausset’s*)

2. It is little wonder that prayer became a primary characteristic of the early church.

Prayer was the breath of the early church’s life (Acts 2:42; 1:24-25; 4:24-30; 6:4,6; 12:5; 13:2-3; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5). So in the epistles (Eph 4:14-21; Rom 1:9-10; 16:25-27; Phil 1:3-11; Col 1:9-15; Heb 13:20-21; 1 Peter 5:10-11). “With one accord” is the keynote of Acts (Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12). (*Fausset’s*)

- B. Jesus prayed before eating meals.
 1. Jesus Christ praying before meals is the first scriptural reference to anyone praying for his meals, Matt. 15:36; John 6:11.
 2. The apostle Paul also prayed for his meals, Acts 27:35.
 3. Praying before meals, usually three times daily, is a good opportunity to pray to God with thanksgiving.
 4. Old Testament Jews customarily prayed three times daily, at 9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m., Psa. 55:17; Dan. 6:10, and King David wrote that he praised God in prayer seven times daily, Psa. 119:164.
- C. Jesus prayed at the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Matt. 26:26-27; 1 Cor. 11:24-25, and we imitate our Lord when we pray at the Lord’s Table.
- D. Jesus prayed in when alone in solitude, Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12.
 1. Jesus instructed his disciples likewise to pray alone in solitude, Matt. 6:6.
 2. Sometimes, we need to seek quiet places in which we

- can pray without interruption or distraction.
- E. Jesus prayed repeatedly in the face of great adversity, Matt. 26:39, 42, 44.
 1. Jesus prayed “earnestly” when in “agony,” Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7.
 2. Likewise, we should pray for personal, family, congregational, national and international adversities.
- F. Jesus prayed for children, Matt. 19:13, and obviously, Christians should also pray for their children and children in general.
- G. Jesus prayed extensively when he was about to make important decisions, Luke 6:12.
 1. We should pray fervently and often when we are about to make important decisions in our lives.
 2. Christians should pray fervently and often when about to make important church decisions.
- H. Jesus prayed asking forgiveness for those who were in the process of murdering him, Luke 23:34.

II. Occasions “when” everyone should pray.

- A. We should pray for governments that we will be able to lead “quiet and peaceable” lives, 1 Tim. 2:1.
- B. We should pray with thanksgiving, not something to be relegated merely to an annual national holiday, Phil. 4:6.
- C. We should pray when we are aware of sin in our lives, Jam. 5:16.
- D. Christians should pray when facing despair over anything, 1 Pet. 5:7; Acts 12:5, 12.
- E. When we realize that we have enemies, we should pray for them, Matt. 5:44.
- F. We should pray when we have genuine needs, Matt. 7:7-11.
- G. We should pray that sufficient workers with the Gospel can evangelize a lost world, Matt. 9:38; 2 Cor. 1:11.
- H. We should pray that we may withstand temptations, Matt. 26:41.

III. Special opportunities to pray.

- A. Parents have special reasons to pray.
 1. Parenting is new ground for each set of new parents, occasioning prayer to be the best possible parents possible.
 2. Bringing children into the home increases demands on

- finances, other available resources and parental skill, for which parents need to approach God in prayer.
3. The frustrations that attend our children during their maturation cause much anguish for parents, for which they should often pray.
- B. Especially church leaders need to multiply occasions to pray.
1. **Elders** need to heavily punctuate with prayers the appointment of deacons, the selection of preachers and the care of the flock, Acts 6:6.
 2. **Preachers** need to make prayer a fundamental part of proclaiming the Word of God, e.g. class and sermon preparation, effectiveness of teaching and preaching, Acts 6:4; Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 1:2.
- C. Christians need to develop opportunities for prayer that will fulfill the direction to “pray without ceasing,” 1 Thess. 5:17.
1. Proponents of the erroneous religion of Islam claim to pray to God five times daily; shouldn’t proponents of the true religion (Christianity) pray as often, e.g. rising in the morning, three meals, before retiring at night?
 2. Can we think of other opportunities to pray **adoration** or **praise**, **thanksgiving** and **petitions** throughout the day, e.g. physical blessings by name, spiritual blessings (including salvation), avoidance of temptation—for anything in life that really matters?

Conclusion:

1. Mankind has prayed to God in each of the three historical religious periods: Patriarchy, Gen. 4:26; Judaism and Christianity.
2. The children of God should live lives characterized by prayer, 1 Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1.
3. Nearly at all times in all places, the child of God should possess an attitude of prayer and often pray to God.
4. Our prayers should include adoration or praise, thanksgiving and petitions.

Invitation:

1. Unlike non-Christians who pray to gods that cannot save, we have a God that can save us from our sins, Isa. 45:20; Heb. 7:25.
2. Salvation is conditional upon human obedience, Heb. 5:8-9; Acts 10:48.
3. Christians must continue to work out their own salvation, Phil. 2:12; Acts 8:22.

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The Threat of Unfettered Entertainment

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Thesis: To encourage Christians to restrain their entertainment choices to prevent softening their conviction against sin, or that may even result or lead to committing sin.

Introduction:

1. We live in an ungodly world, 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Pet. 5:8.
2. The ungodly world in which we live provides all the popular entertainment choices, many of which entertainment choices reflect the ungodly world and its god, 1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26.
3. Responsible Christians, though, must make wise entertainment choices that harmonize with the Gospel, Jam. 4:7.
4. We cannot allow Satan to “get an advantage” over us, and we “are not ignorant of his devices,” 2 Cor. 2:11.
5. Christians must discard whatever is “against the knowledge of God” and bring “every thought to the obedience of Christ,” 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

Body:

- I. Several mediums present entertainment choices through which a person may seek some amusement.**
 - A. Seldom if ever is the medium through which entertainment presents itself intrinsically evil.
 1. For instance, televisions are neither good nor evil of themselves.
 2. The Internet is a device that is neither good nor evil of itself.
 3. Cardboard with diamonds, hearts, spades, clubs or some other design has no morality of itself, i.e. cards are neither good nor evil of themselves.
 4. Dogs, horses and cars have no intrinsic goodness or evil.
 - B. However, nearly any medium through which one may be entertained can be used in a sinful way.
 1. The printed page with its text and pictures is neither

- intrinsically good nor evil, though the content of the text or pictures may be good or evil.
2. Radios, CD's and other electronic equipment and electronic media possess no inherent goodness or badness, but the content may, in fact, be good or evil.
 3. Even something like fishing, neither right nor wrong of itself, can become a sinful activity if one goes fishing instead of assembling with the saints on the Lord's Day, Heb. 10:25-31.
 4. We get the idea.
- C. Christians have a responsibility to themselves and to God to evaluate every potential entertainment choice with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
1. Is this something that I can do without committing sin?
 2. Is this something that I can do without facing temptation to commit sin?
 3. Is this something that I can do without impairing my influence as a child of God?
 4. Is this something that I can do without minding if others, including Jesus Christ, see me doing it?
 5. Is this something that I can do without neglecting my Christian responsibilities, e.g. worship, Bible class?

II. Several kinds of unfettered entertainment threaten Christians' souls.

- A. "Unfettered" means "unrestrained."
1. God has placed limits on humanity respecting Christian living, e.g. the New Testament, 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 9:15.
 2. It is up to mankind to realize that he is not at liberty to completely choose his own conduct, Jer. 10:23; Prov. 20:24.
- B. Some **video games** promote immorality or otherwise threaten souls.
1. One or more video games promote shooting police, rape, pornography, illicit drug use, stealing cars and murder, prompting several states to draft legislation to limit sales of these to minors and many church groups to oppose them.
 2. The medium of a video game is neither right nor wrong, but the content will determine whether a

- particular video game is a threat to one's soul.
3. Does the game condone sinful activity, Rom. 1:32; 2 Thess. 2:12?
- C. Some **movies** and **television** shows promote immorality or otherwise threaten souls.
1. What passes for acceptable primetime, family viewing on television today brings some of the most immoral samples of our society into our homes, e.g. sex, violence, drunkenness, drug abuse, homosexuality, etc.
 2. How difficult is it to think on good things when the scripts for what we watch lead us to root for depraved specimens of society, Phil. 4:8?
 3. Don't we begin to view as less serious the sins that are so commonly illustrated often in vivid detail upon television and movie screens?
 4. Isn't it an impossible task to convince family, friends and neighbors of our sincerity as Christians when we revel in some of the same debauchery that they do when they view their videos or television and movie screens, Rom. 2:1?
- D. Some **Internet** content promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls.
1. Especially parents need to exercise vigilance to protect their children from explicit and harmful Internet content, i.e. set strict filters with password protection for search engines.
 2. The Internet is a tremendous tool for good, but it can be likewise a channel through which every "filthy conduct" flows into one's home, 2 Pet. 2:7 NKJV.
 3. "Filthy conduct," such as pornography, is as dangerous for adults as it is for minors, and it is a part of the "every form of evil" from which Christians need to "abstain," 1 Thess. 5:8 ASV, NKJV.
- E. Some **music** promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls.
1. Some people erroneously suppose that, for instance, all rock music is sinful, but country music is all right.
 2. Rather than ascribing sin to the notes and beat (e.g. rock versus country, etc.), the lyrics of any music primarily determine if it promotes immorality or

- otherwise threatens souls.
3. The words, themes and messages of songs in most if not all types of music are riddled with immorality, especially including country music today.
 4. It is no more appropriate to sing or listen to words and sinful activity praised than it would be for us to emulate those sins in our lives, 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 2:21.
- F. Some **printed matter** promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls.
1. Sometimes it's the text that portrays in a favorable light this ungodly world and the pleasures of sin, Heb. 11:25; Jam. 5:5.
 2. Sometimes pictures portray favorably especially sexual perversions, e.g. pornography, 1 Cor. 6:9.
 3. The child of God does not "abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul" when he or she reads of the devil's literature, 1 Pet. 2:11.
- G. Some **recreation** promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls.
1. Gambling, for instance, is not merely a form of harmless recreation because it harms most of those who engage in it as well as diminishes the biblical work ethic, Eph. 4:28.
 2. Fun in the sun where people in the presence of other people dress scantily goes against biblical instruction both about modesty and lust, 1 Tim. 2:9; Matt. 5:28, e.g. sunbathing, public swimming where contemporary swimsuits prevail.
 3. How can the child of God convince his family, friends and neighbors of his sincerity as a Christian when he chooses recreation that promotes immorality or otherwise threatens souls?
- H. Some **social activities** promote immorality or otherwise threaten souls.
1. Modern dances have long contributed to improper handling of unmarried males and females, often leading to fornication, 1 Pet. 4:3 NKJV; Titus 2:12.
 2. The pleasurable consumption of alcohol dilutes one's inhibitions and is often the threshold to additional sin,

Gal. 5:21.

3. How can the child of God convince his family, friends and neighbors of his sincerity as a Christian when he or she also pursues the vices of the world?

Conclusion:

1. We must never “give place to the devil,” Eph. 4:27.
2. It doesn’t make any sense to not “give place to the devil” in our Christian worship and Christian service if we “give place to the devil” in our Christian living when it comes to our entertainment choices, Jam. 4:7.
3. Can the world tell the difference between the speech, conduct and entertainment choices of Christians versus worldly speech, conduct and entertainment choices?
4. **If not, there may not be enough evidence to convict us as Christians!**
5. Christians must bring “every thought to the obedience of Christ,” 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

Invitation:

1. Christians follow the lead and instruction of Jesus Christ, Matt. 10:38; 1 Pet. 2:21.
2. Begin the Christian journey by becoming a child of God, Acts 2:38.
3. If an erring child of God, get back on the heavenly path, 1 John 1:9.

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

2 Timothy 2:15

Thesis: To properly discern partitions in the Bible whereby it can be correctly understood.

Introduction:

1. Before I became a Christian, the Bible was an unintelligible jumble of words that I did not even know how to approach sensibly.
 - a. I was barely aware that the Bible was comprised of two divisions or testaments, and I did not know which to begin reading or why.
 - b. Arriving at genealogies of unfamiliar names in Genesis 5 and Matthew 1, I simply gave up in frustration.
2. In addition to that, I had always been told that the Bible was a *dead letter* anyway.
3. It also appeared upon casual inspection that the Bible was self-contradictory.
4. It was little wonder, then, that it seemed that anyone could prove or disprove anything from the Bible.
5. After study, however, all of this disillusionment turned out to be self-inflicted because I did ‘not rightly divide the word of truth,’ 2 Tim. 2:15 KJV.
 - a. The Bible is mysterious and dark as long as one does ‘not rightly divide the word of truth.’
 - b. The trouble, though, lies not with God or his message to mankind, but with anyone who through ignorance or stubbornness does ‘not handle aright the word of truth,’ 2 Tim. 2:15 ASV.

Body:

- I. **First, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by noting the respective roles of the Old Testament and the New Testament.**
 - A. No other single observation contributes more greatly to rightly dividing the Word of Truth than noting the respective roles of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. It is not possible to practice correctly both the Old Testament and the New Testament at the same time.
 2. When people try to practice both testaments at the same time, they find the Bible contradictory.
 3. Therefore, mankind often selects items from both testaments of the Bible to meld into a religion with which he is pleased—ignoring unselected things in both testaments.
 4. Mankind has no valid concept of authority in religion or how God has communicated his will to humanity when he fails to recognize the respective roles of the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- B. The Old Testament covers two periods of time—Patriarchy and Judaism.
1. Patriarchy began in the Garden of Eden and was replaced for the Jews at the inauguration of Judaism at Mt. Sinai, Gen.-Exod.
 2. For Gentiles (non-Jews), Patriarchy may have continued to either the cross of Christ or until the Gospel was preached to Gentiles, Acts 10-11.
- C. The New Testament covers one period of time from the cross of Christ through the present and until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
1. The New Testament replaced the Old Testament—Patriarchy and Judaism, Matt. 5:17-18; Rom. 7:6-7; 2 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:15.
 2. Anyone who looks to the Old Testament for religious instruction instead of looking to the New Testament is seriously misguided and spiritually jeopardized, Gal. 5:4.
 3. The purpose of the Law (Old Testament) was to prepare humanity for the coming of Jesus Christ, who brought the Truth (Gospel), Gal. 3:23-25; John 1:17.
- D. Hence, rightly dividing the Word of Truth involves turning to the New Testament exclusively for religious instruction.
1. That means one today cannot turn to the Old Testament (Patriarchy or Judaism) for religious instruction.
 2. However, the Old Testament is the foundation of the New Testament and contains numerous principles still

useful today, Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; 10:1-11.

3. Further, people today are not authorized to turn to manmade creeds or doctrines for religious instruction.

II. Second, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting salvation in the New Testament from all other plans of salvation.

- A. One today must turn to the New Testament exclusively for information about salvation.
 1. No one today should suppose that building an ark like Noah built will save anyone, 1 Pet. 3:20.
 2. Animal sacrifices characteristic of Patriarchy and Judaism cannot save anyone today, Exod. 29:36 (atonement).
 3. Manmade religion cannot save anyone either, but people must obey the New Testament doctrine (Gospel), Matt. 15:9; Rom. 6:17.
- B. Strictly speaking, there was no absolute salvation available under the Old Testament—Patriarchy or Judaism.
 1. Sins under the Old Testament were never absolutely forgiven, only overlooked annually, Heb. 10:1-4.
 2. Had there been forgiveness of sin available under either Patriarchy or Judaism (the Old Testament), Jesus Christ would not have had to come to earth from heaven and die sacrificially on the cross, Eph. 2:16; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 1:20; John 3:17.
 3. Since sins could not be forgiven under the Old Testament, and only the sacrifice of Jesus made it possible for sins to be remitted, no plan of man can take the place of the divine plan for human redemption.

III. Third, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting New Testament worship with all other ways of worshipping God.

- A. Through rightly dividing the Word of Truth, one today can know how not to worship God.
 1. Old Testament worship is not authorized for worship of God today, e.g. candles, incense, animal sacrifices, instrumental music, etc.
 2. Manmade worship is not authorized for worship of God today, e.g. deviation from New Testament

worship by excluding or adding items to worship, Col. 2:23.

- B. Today, one can know how to worship God by appealing exclusively to the New Testament.
 - 1. Four of the five acts of New Testament worship appear in Acts 2:42, i.e. teaching or preaching, contribution, Lord's Supper and prayer, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 2. Singing hymns, psalms and spiritual songs is a fifth act of New Testament worship, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:15, 26.
 - 3. The New Testament authorizes nothing besides these five acts of worship for today.

IV. Fourth, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting Christian living with all other ways to live one's life.

- A. The Old Testament is not a suitable source of instruction for Christian living.
 - 1. For instance, polygamy that God overlooked in the Old Testament is not permissible under Christianity, Gen. 4:19; 26:34; Exod. 21:10; 1 Sam. 1:2; 2 Chron. 24:3; Matt. 19:3-6; 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6.
 - 2. The Old Testament is not a suitable source for instruction how to deal with idolaters, Deut. 7:1-5.
- B. One today must turn exclusively to the New Testament for instruction in Christian living.
 - 1. The New Testament teaches to refuse some things in one's life and to seek virtues, Titus 2:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 2 Pet. 1:5-9; Phil. 4:8.
 - 2. In the New Testament, lists of sins to avoid also teach how to properly live the Christian life, 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8.
 - 3. The best ideas of feeble humans are not worthy to substitute for what the New Testament teaches respecting Christian living, Jude 4.

V. Fifth, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting Christian service with all other ways in which someone may attempt to serve God.

- A. Service acceptable under the Old Testament does not guarantee acceptability under the New Testament.
 - 1. Noah was commissioned to build an ark, but no one

today by turning to the Old Testament has that same commission.

2. Moses was commissioned to build the Tabernacle, and Solomon built the Jewish Temple, but no one today by turning to the Old Testament has those responsibilities.
- B. Christian service is authorized in the New Testament.
1. The Lord's church has a three-fold mission of evangelism, edification and benevolence, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 14:12, 26; Gal. 6:10; 2 Cor. 9:13.
 2. Nothing less than or more than what the New Testament authorizes qualifies as Christian service, though the means of fulfilling the church mission may vary somewhat in methodology, e.g. various modes of transportation and communication.
 3. Christian service may be performed collectively as congregations and individually as Christians, Jam. 1:27.

Conclusion:

1. Without rightly dividing the Word of Truth, the Bible is unintelligible and appears contradictory.
2. First, one must discern between the respective roles of the Old Testament and the New Testament.
3. One must discern from the New Testament what is authorized for worship, Christian living and Christian service.

Invitation:

1. Only by rightly dividing the Word of Truth can one know assuredly how to receive the forgiveness of sins.
2. Unbaptized believers must be immersed in water for the remission of sins, Rom. 6:3-5; Acts 22:16.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Shall We Tithe

Luke 18:12

Thesis: To determine from Scripture whether Christians are commanded to tithe, and to determine if there are any lessons we can draw from tithing.

Introduction:

1. The word “tithe” in some form appears 43 times in the Bible and refers to “a tenth” of one’s increase (income) that he was to give to God, Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-24.
2. Abraham is the first biblical character observed giving a tithe, Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:1-9.
3. The “tithe” appears in the New Testament only in Matthew, Luke and Hebrews.
 - a. In Matthew and Luke, the tithe pertains to Jews living under Judaism who were contemporary with Jesus, Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12 ASV.
 - b. In Hebrews, the tithe pertains to Patriarchal times when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, Heb. 7:5-6, 8-9.
 - c. The tithe does not appear in the New Testament associated with any approved example, apostolic command or implication for its practice under Christianity.

Body:

I. God authorized tithing during Old Testament times, under Patriarchy and Judaism.

- A. Abraham lived before Judaism, but he tithed.
 1. Abraham is considered the father of the Jews.
 2. He lived under Patriarchy, not under the Law of Moses (Judaism), which came later.
 3. Therefore, tithing is older than Judaism.
- B. Jacob also tithed, Gen. 28:22.
 1. Jacob pledged to God “of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”
 2. Also living under Patriarchy, Jacob did not live under Judaism, which came after his time.
- C. Tithing was also a definite part of Judaism or the Law of Moses.

1. Tithing was the primary way that God saw to the financing of Judaism.
 2. Tithing appears at the institution of Judaism in Lev. 27:30-33, and tithing supported the priestly tribe (Levi), Num. 18:21-24.
 3. Tithes resulted in abundance—more than could be immediately consumed or used, 2 Chron. 31:5-12.
 4. However, tithing was not a suitable substitute for obedience in other areas of life and religion, Matt. 23:23.
- D. Under Judaism, God considered it robbery when the Jews failed to tithe, Mal. 3:8.

II. God authorized the freewill contribution in the New Testament for Christianity.

- A. Tithing does not appear in the New Testament except with reference to Abraham or those living under the Law of Moses (Judaism).
- B. Instead, God through the New Testament **instructs** his people to finance Christianity exclusively through freewill giving, 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7.
- C. The New Testament records **examples** of freewill giving by the early church, but no occasions of tithing, Acts 4:34-37; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 9:13.

III. Shall we tithe today?

- A. Perhaps if our freewill giving equaled the Old Testament tithe or tenth of our increase, there would be an abundance with which to pursue the work of the Lord's church, 2 Chron. 31:5-12.
- B. However, there is neither a New Testament command nor an example of tithing in the New Testament associated with the Lord's church.
 1. Of course, this does not necessarily rule out giving 10% of our increase if that corresponds to giving according to our prosperity and as we purpose in our hearts, 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7.
 2. Do we dare give less than a tenth of our increase that was required under Patriarchy and Judaism?
- C. At least, we should consider giving more than a tenth of our prosperity, 2 Cor. 9:6.
 1. Jesus memorialized a poor widow whose devotion to

God exceeded her regard for her poverty when she gave all that she had, Luke 21:1-4.

2. The devotion of the Macedonians overrode their consideration of their prosperity (really, poverty) when they gave more than they could afford, 2 Cor. 8:1-4.

Conclusion:

1. Shouldn't we, who enjoy richer spiritual blessings and often-greater material blessings than those under the Old Testament, be somewhat afraid to give less than an amount equal to the Old Testament tithe (10%) of our increase?
2. Though not obligated under the New Testament to tithe or give 10% of one's increase, the Christian nevertheless has a responsibility to give generously, freely and purposefully.
3. When Old Testament people withheld their tithes, God considered it robbery; certainly, God considers it robbery today when Christians fail to give freely according to their prosperity.
4. Yet, the child of God must also practice righteousness in addition to practicing freewill giving according to one's prosperity, Matt. 23:23; 5:20; Luke 18:9-14.

Invitation:

1. Any lost soul, though he or she might give all to the Lord, will not benefit in that lost state.
2. Unbaptized believers need to be immersed in water for the remission of sins, Acts 8:38-39; 22:16.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

A Longtime Coming

1 Peter 1:20

Thesis: To emphasize the longtime coming of Jesus Christ so that the world could be saved, and to consequently call attention to the need for mankind to take advantage of God's plan of redemption for humanity.

Introduction:

1. Mankind has been in need of a Savior from the time Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12.
2. The first veiled promise of a Savior occurs in Gen. 3:15.
3. However, God was aware that mankind would sin, and he planned from eternity to send Jesus Christ as a Savior, 1 Pet. 1:20; Eph. 3:10-11; Titus 1:2.
4. Yet, instead of saving Adam and Eve from their sins, God prepared mankind for thousands of years to correctly understand the enormity of sin and to appreciate the equal enormity of salvation: Patriarchy (2,500 years) and Judaism (1,500 years).

Body:

- I. **God prepared mankind through the Age of Patriarchy to understand the enormity of sin and to appreciate the equal enormity of salvation.**
 - A. God impressed Adam and Eve in a number of ways respecting the enormity of sin.
 1. Immediately, God **slew animals** to clothe Adam and Eve with hides, Gen. 3:21.
 2. Under Patriarchy, humanity was to offer **animal sacrifices** on account of sin, Gen. 4:4; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:19.
 - B. The enormity of sin led God to destroy the world with a universal flood, Gen. 6.
 1. Only eight persons and samples from the animal world were spared the great flood, Gen. 7; 1 Pet. 3:20.
 2. The universal flood stands as a testimony to God's great hatred of sin as well as his willingness to save an obedient humanity, 2 Pet. 3:3-6.

II. God prepared mankind through the Age of Judaism to understand the enormity of sin and to appreciate the equal enormity of salvation.

- A. From the inauguration of Judaism throughout its duration, God impressed humanity with the enormity of sin and the equal enormity of salvation.
 - 1. Immediately upon the inauguration of Judaism, God punished with death 3,000 Israelites who had turned to idolatry, *Exod. 32:27-28*.
 - 2. Likewise on other occasions in the first 40 years of Judaism, God caused many Israelites who were guilty of idolatry and fornication to be put to death, *Num. 25:1-9*; *1 Cor. 10:8*.
 - 3. God allowed the Assyrian Empire to conquer and remove from Palestine the northern kingdom of Israel because of sin, especially idolatry: 722 B.C.
 - 4. God allowed the Babylonian Empire to conquer and remove from Palestine the southern kingdom of Judah because of sin, especially idolatry: 586 B.C.
- B. God stressed the enormity of sin and the equal enormity of salvation by promising the Israelites a future Savior.
 - 1. The Old Testament contains about 332 Messianic prophecies about the coming Savior.
 - 2. The Old Testament prophets faithfully prophesied of the coming Messiah and longed to see that day, *1 Pet. 1:9-12, 20*; *Eph. 3:3-12*.
- C. God's preparation of humanity to realize the enormity of sin and the equal enormity of salvation culminated in the cross of Christ.
 - 1. Jesus Christ left all the glory and splendor of the magnificent heavenly realm to become a fleshly Savior, *Phil. 2:5-8*; *John 1:14*.
 - 2. The purpose of becoming flesh and blood was to have a body to sacrifice and blood to shed for the salvation of humanity, *Heb. 2:14-17*.
 - 3. The prospect of human salvation cost the Son of God his life on the cross—that is the enormity of sin and the equal enormity of salvation.

Conclusion:

- 1. Salvation was a longtime coming: 4,000 years.

2. The longsuffering of God preceding the destruction of this world with fire is so that more souls can be saved, 2 Pet. 3:9-15.
3. However, human salvation is not unconditional; salvation is freely available to all who obey the Gospel Truth, Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 6:17-18.
4. Furthermore, souls who do not obey the Gospel will be lost eternally, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Invitation:

1. There is no other sacrifice than the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to take away one's sins, Heb. 10:26; Acts 4:12.
2. Every person must work out his own salvation according to God's plan for human redemption, Phil. 2:12; Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

Divine Design

Colossians 3:18-21

Thesis: God designed two divine institutions on earth, and to God's Word one must go to learn what God wants us to know about them.

Introduction:

1. God designed and regulated two divine institutions that pertain to the Christian or Gospel Age in which we live.
2. One must go to God to observe the divine design of these two institutions: the church and the home.
3. Neither the church nor the home can be all that it can be if either differs from the divine design intended respectively for each of them.
4. God has revealed the divine design of both the church and the home in his Word (what we call the Bible).

Body:

I. Note the divine design of the church.

- A. The divine design of the Lord's church is discernible in its organization.
 1. Every congregation is supposed to be autonomous, which means self-ruling, Acts 14:23; 20:28.
 2. Every fully organized church will have elders, deacons, preachers, teachers and other Christians, 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 5:12-14; Acts 8:1, 4.
 3. The Lord's church is aware that deviations from or additions to the divine design of its organization are not authorized.
- B. The divine design of the Lord's church is discernible in its worship.
 1. The Lord's church assembles for worship every first day of the week, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 2. Acts of worship include the Lord's Supper, preaching, giving, prayer and singing, Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15.
 3. The Lord's church is careful not to substitute or add "will worship" or 'vain worship' in place of biblically authorized worship, Col. 2:23; Matt. 15:9.
- C. The divine design of the Lord's church is discernible in its

mission.

1. The Lord's church has been commissioned to evangelize the world with the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16.
 2. The Lord's church has been charged to edify or build up itself with the Word of God, 1 Cor. 14:12, 26.
 3. The Lord's church has the responsibility to practice benevolence toward Christians and non-Christians as it has opportunity, Gal. 6:10; 2 Cor. 9:13.
 4. The Lord's church realizes that it is not authorized to modify, add to or subtract from its mission, Rev. 22:18-19.
- D. The divine design of the Lord's church is discernible in its creed.
1. The only creed of the Lord's church is the New Testament or Gospel itself, also referred to as "the apostles' doctrine," Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20; 2 Pet. 3:1-2.
 2. Deviations from or modifications to the Gospel are strictly forbidden, Gal. 1:6-7.
- E. The divine design of the Lord's church is discernible in its message.
1. The message of the Lord's church is the Gospel of Christ, 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
 2. Otherwise, the message of the Lord's church is called "the doctrine of Christ," 2 John 9-11.
 3. Neither anything less than nor more than "all the counsel of God" deserves to be heralded by the church, e.g. social Gospel, politics, nationalism, culture, entertainment, purely social issues, etc., Acts 20:27.

II. Note the divine design of the home.

- A. The divine design of the home is discernible in that each home begins with a man and a woman as husband and wife and usually also as mother and father.
1. God designed the home in the Garden of Eden with one man and one woman, Gen. 2:21-25; Matt. 19:4-6.
 2. God has consistently condemned every other arrangement respecting a home, Lev. 20:13-16; 1 Cor. 6:9.
- B. The divine design of the home is discernible in that there is a role for a husband.
1. God designed the home with the husband responsible

- for leading the home, Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3.
2. Husbands are to temper their responsibility to rule their homes with love for their wives, Eph. 5:22-25.
- C. The divine design of the home is discernible in that there is a role for a wife.
1. The wife is to submit to the leadership of her husband and respect him, Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:33.
 2. In addition, the wife is to love her husband, Titus 2:4-5.
- D. The divine design of the home is discernible in that there is a role for a mother.
1. Mothers are to love their children, Titus 2:4-5.
 2. Mothers are to provide a home life for the children, 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:5.
 3. There is a place for grandmothers as well as mothers in the upbringing of children, 2 Tim. 1:5.
- E. The divine design of the home is discernible in that there is a role for a father.
1. The father must guide his children spiritually, Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:15.
 2. Fathers are cautioned by Scripture not to be overly harsh with their children, Col. 3:21.
 3. Nevertheless, fathers ultimately are responsible for the discipline of their children for the purpose of their spiritual and physical welfare, Heb. 12:5-11.
- F. The divine design of the home is discernible in that there is a role for children.
1. Children have the responsibility to obey their father and mother, Eph. 6:1-2; Col. 3:20.
 2. Children are warned not to disobey parents, 2 Tim. 3:2.
 3. Later in life, children have the responsibility to care for their parents, 1 Tim. 5:4, 8.
- G. Each family has its own personality respecting God and his Word.
1. Some homes are like Eli's family, undisciplined and sinful, 1 Sam. 3:13.
 2. Some homes are like Abraham's family, taught and obedient to God, Gen. 18:19.
 3. Some homes are like Achan's family, suffering because of the sin of other family members, Josh. 7:24-

25.

4. What are the personalities of our families?

Conclusion:

1. The only reliable information about the divine design of God's institutions, the church and the home, is in the Bible.
2. Whatever the Bible teaches about the church and the home pertains to the divine design of each by God.
3. Mankind is an unreliable source of information respecting the divine design of the church and the home.
4. For the church to be all that it can be in our lives, we must turn to the Word of God for instruction.
5. For the home to be all that it can be in our lives, we must turn to the Word of God for instruction.

Invitation:

1. Likewise, the Word of God is the only reliable resource to which we can turn to learn about God's redemptive plan for humanity, John 5:39.
2. Believers need to be immersed in water for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38; Col. 2:12.
3. Erring Christians need to acknowledge their sins and turn to God in prayer for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Matthew 3:11

Thesis: To identify the recipients, nature and manifestations of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to learn whether this baptism can be received today.

Introduction:

1. The Old Testament looked forward toward the Pentecost of Acts 2, and Christianity looks back to that Pentecost for its beginning.
 - a. Old Testament prophecy predicted events associated with the Pentecost of Acts 2, Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3.
 - b. The Lord's church came into existence on the Pentecost of Acts 2, Acts 2:47.
2. Pentecost was an Old Testament Jewish feast that God had ordained as a part of Judaism.
 - a. Also called the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost was one of three annual feasts that Jewish males were required to attend, Exod. 34:22-23.
 - b. Pentecost was observed seven weeks and one day (a total of 50 days) after the Passover Sabbath, Lev. 23:4-21.
 - c. Hence, Pentecost was always on the first day of the week.
 - d. Visitors to Jerusalem and residents together during Pentecost often would number over a million people.
 - e. That was the likely scene in Jerusalem on the birthday of the Lord's church on the Pentecost of Acts 2.
3. The Pentecost of Acts 2 was unique in that the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, after which they began to preach by inspiration, and at which time the Lord's church was established, Acts 2:1-47.
 - a. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was upon the 12 apostles only, Acts 1:26; 2:1-4, 7, 14.
 - b. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles was accompanied by a sound, Acts 2:2.
 - c. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles was accompanied by something to see, Acts 2:3.

- d. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles resulted in something being done; after being filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles spoke God's Truth in other tongues or languages that they had not learned.
4. Let's examine some facts about the baptism of the Holy Spirit to determine from the Bible if the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs today.
 - a. If we should find by an examination of Scripture that the baptism of the Holy Spirit does not occur today, then whatever passes for the baptism of the Holy Spirit today is something else and not the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Whatever the Bible says about the baptism of the Holy Spirit (or any other subject) is definitive or absolute and should be accepted without reservation or hedging by every Bible believer.

Body:

I. Deity alone is the administrator of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- A. Jesus Christ alone is accredited in Scripture with being the administrator of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Luke 24:49; John 16:7; Acts 1:4; 2:33.
- B. God the Father participated in sending the baptism of the Holy Spirit, John 14:16; 15:26.
- C. Nowhere does Scripture attribute the administration of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to anyone besides deity, Matt. 3:11.

II. The apostles of Christ were to be the only recipients of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:5.

- A. The prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 promised miraculous power would accompany the birthday of the church.
 1. The apostle Peter confirmed Joel's prophecy applied to the birthday of the church commencing with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:16-21.
 2. Joel's prophecy does not distinguish between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and other miraculous power enabled by the Holy Spirit, Heb. 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:4-11.
 3. Whereas the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, others in the first century received miraculous power after an apostle laid his hands on them and prayer, Acts 8:15-17; 19:6.

- B. The pronoun “you” in Matthew 3:11 concerning who would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit is identified by Jesus to be his apostles, Acts 1:2-5.
- C. The apostles of Jesus were the only ones to whom the baptism of the Holy Spirit was specifically promised.
 - 1. The apostles were the only ones present when Jesus promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit, John 14: 26; 15:26-27; 16:7, 13.
 - 2. Accordingly, on the birthday of the church in Acts 2, only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:26; 2:1-4, 7, 14.
- D. Furthermore, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a **promise** rather than a **command** like the Great Commission baptism, Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33, 39; 10:48.

III. What was the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

- A. A primary purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to adequately prepare the apostles for their special ministry.
 - 1. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were taught the will of God and caused to remember what Jesus had already taught them, John 14:26.
 - 2. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were guided into all truth, John 16:13.
- B. Another major function of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to confirm God’s Word and validate his holy apostles who proclaimed it.
 - 1. The purpose of miracles was to validate Jesus Christ as the Son of God—the Messiah, John 20:30-31.
 - 2. The apostles before any others were to use miracles to confirm the Word of God and prove they were God’s spokesmen, Mark 16:17-20.
- C. The Word of God—the New Testament—has been confirmed already through miracles attributable to both Holy Spirit baptism upon the apostles and those upon whom the apostles laid hands to give miraculous power, Heb. 2:3-4.

IV. The duration of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was limited.

- A. God determined that miracles would cease when they accomplished the purpose for which they were given.
 - 1. Miracles were temporary and especially useful during and shortly after the establishment of the Lord’s church, 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

2. Miracles enabled early church leaders at the beginning of the church and for decades following to appropriately guide the church in God's will, Eph. 4:11-14.
- B. Miracles ceased when they had accomplished the purpose for which they were given.
1. Miracles were no longer needed after the New Testament was written and collected, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14.
 2. After the apostles died, and after the last person upon whom an apostle had laid hands to give miraculous power died, there were no more miracles.
- C. By the time the Book of Ephesians was penned, the apostle Paul wrote that there was only one baptism still valid in Christianity, Eph. 4:5.
1. That one baptism is the baptism of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:20.
 2. That baptism is a water baptism that saves, 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16.

Conclusion:

1. Only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. It was promised exclusively to the apostles, John 14-16.
 - b. Only the apostles on the birthday of the church received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:26; 2:1-4, 7, 14.
 - c. The 3,000 converts on the birthday of the church continued in the apostles' doctrine, not the doctrine of the 120, etc., Acts 2:42.
 - d. There is no record of the 120 or anyone else receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Penitent souls in Acts 2 appealed to the apostles rather than to the 120 or others for information about salvation, Acts 2:37.
 - f. The recipients of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 were referred to as Galileans, which narrows down the identity of who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - g. Luke did not write the Book of Acts respecting the deeds of the 120, but the deeds or acts of the apostles.
2. Miracles ceased with the death of the last apostle and the last one upon whom an apostle laid hands to give miraculous ability.
3. There are no living candidates to be apostles of Christ, because no one living today accompanied Jesus in his earthly ministry and saw

the resurrected Lord, Acts 1:21-22; 9:3-6; 1 Cor. 15:8.

4. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not needed since his role has been completed, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14; Jam. 1:25; Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4; John 20:30-31.
5. From the Bible one learns that neither the baptism of the Holy Spirit nor other miracles are needed or occur today.

Invitation:

1. However, the baptism with which people living today need to concern themselves is the baptism of the Great Commission, Mark 16:16.
2. Furthermore, once one becomes a baptized believer, on occasions of future sin, he or she must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Only Testament of Jesus Christ

Hebrews 8:6-7

Thesis: To counter a popular denominational claim that there is “another testament of Jesus Christ” (and the additional claims of others respecting new revelation today) by emphasizing the finality of the New Testament revelation from God to man.

Introduction:

1. Is there any new revelation from God available to mankind since the completion of the New Testament? Many sincere religious people answer, “Yes!”
 - a. Are there modern-day prophets or apostles receiving new revelation from God in our time? Again, many people today believe God is still giving mankind new revelation.
 - b. Is there “another testament of Jesus Christ”? One religious group advertises on television that they have “another testament of Jesus Christ.”
2. The answers to these questions lie within the pages of the Bible.
 - a. Unfortunately, most religious people today know so little of the Bible that they fail to distinguish the respective roles of the Old and New testaments.
 - b. Further, many people know so little about the New Testament that they can neither implement it in their lives nor do they know if they should expect continual revelation from God, such as “another testament of Jesus Christ.”
3. The Bible is not so difficult to understand or vague that one cannot discern between genuine revelation from God and **pretended** revelations from God.
 - a. First, it is important to know the respective roles of the Old and New testaments.
 - b. Second, it is imperative that one knows whether the New Testament is God’s final revelation to mankind.
 - c. Fortunately, both the Old and New testaments provide definitive information with which one can know the answers to these questions.

Body:

I. The Old Testament's role was preparatory to the establishment of the New Testament and the coming of the Messiah.

- A. God never intended for the Old Testament to be his final revelation to mankind.
 - 1. The Old Testament was incapable of accomplishing the actual forgiveness of sins, Heb. 10:1-4.
 - 2. The Old Testament prepared humanity for the establishment of the New Testament, Gal. 3:19-25.
 - 3. The Old Testament foretold the coming of the Messiah through whom one's sins can actually be forgiven, Isa. 53:10-11.
- B. God **does** intend for the New Testament to be his final revelation to mankind.
 - 1. The New Testament reveals that one's sins can be forgiven actually, owing to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, through the shedding of his blood, Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.
 - 2. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament anticipates a future lawgiver, an additional covenant or any new revelation postdating the New Testament, i.e. Joseph Smith, the Book of the Mormon, latter-day apostles and inspired prophets or even a role beyond the forgiveness of sins available through Jesus Christ, Heb. 10:9-10, 26.

II. The Bible only knows of two testaments, not three, i.e. "another testament of Jesus Christ."

- A. The Old Testament anticipated or foretold of a second testament.
 - 1. First, the Old Testament did not anticipate or foretell of a third testament (or any revelation from God beyond a second testament).
 - 2. However, the Old Testament did predict a second or New Testament, Jer. 31:31-34.
 - 3. The writer of the Book of Hebrews quoted God in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and applied it to the New Testament, Heb. 8:5-13.
- B. Furthermore, there are **only two lawgivers**, respectively, of the Old and New testaments.

1. Moses gave the Old Testament and Jesus Christ brought the New Testament, John 1:17.
 2. Neither Joseph Smith nor Moroni was a lawgiver of a third testament called the Book of the Mormon.
 3. Still further, there are no contemporary, inspired prophets or apostles through whom God sends new revelation to mankind, Jude 3 ASV, NKJV; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14.
- C. The New Testament entertains but two testaments.
1. Inspired New Testament writers acknowledged the Old Testament and the New Testament **only**, Heb. 8:6-7, 13; 9:1, 15, 18; 10:9.
 2. The Old Testament is no longer the law of God to which people living must turn for divine instruction, 2 Cor. 3:11, 14; Heb. 7:22; 9:15, 20; Rom. 7:6-7; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:6-7.
 3. The New Testament does not anticipate or foretell of a third testament (or any revelation from God beyond itself).

III. The New Testament is God's final revelation to mankind, an "everlasting covenant," Heb. 13:20.

- A. The New Testament is God's present and final revelation of his will to mankind, Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 9:15, 20.
- B. No deviation from the New Testament was allowed in the first century.
1. Congregations in the sub-Roman province of Galatia had accepted a modified Gospel, for which the apostle Paul rebuked them, Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 11:4.
 2. The apostle John cautioned Christians to compare teaching and preaching to the Gospel to discern false teachers, 1 John 4:1; 2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Pet. 2:1-3.
 3. Paul lamented that his fellow Jews had rejected the Gospel God gave in favor of adopting their own standard of righteousness, Rom. 10:1-3.
- C. Additions, subtractions and modifications to the New Testament are strictly forbidden.
1. God has always refused mankind the prerogative or permission to alter his divine Word, Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6.

2. Likewise, God forbids alteration of the New Testament, Rev. 22:18-19.
- D. The New Testament represents itself as God's final revelation to mankind.
1. The final book of the New Testament demonstrates the victory of God, especially Jesus Christ, and the victory of those who faithfully follow the way of the Lord.
 2. No additional revelation from God to mankind is anticipated within the New Testament because nothing else is needed.

Conclusion:

1. There **is not** "another testament of Jesus Christ."
2. There has been no new revelation from God to mankind since the close of the New Testament.
3. The New Testament is the final revelation of God to mankind.

Invitation:

1. It is to the New Testament **only** one living today must turn for instruction about salvation and preparation for eternity.
2. One must **hear** God's Word only, Rom. 10:17; **believe** Jesus Christ is the Son of God, John 8:24; **repent** of sin, Luke 13:3; **publicly acknowledge** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Rom. 10:9-10; be **immersed** for the remission of sins, Col. 2:12; Acts 2:38.
3. Unfaithful Christians must **repent and pray**, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.