



**An undenominational publication  
devoted to the teachings of Jesus and  
His apostles and dedicated to those who  
seek the truth.**

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## **AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE**



The 20th century saw a huge shift in the moral values of our society. Behavior that would have been considered scandalous in 1900 was being commended by 2000. To any thoughtful person it is obvious that the human race has a problem when it comes to determining right and wrong.

Although it is tempting to say, “This is exactly what happens when people reject the Bible,” the problem actually goes deeper than that. The root of the problem is most clearly seen in the Garden of Eden. We humans do not want God telling us what to do. It is not just that we reject the Bible—we reject God Himself. We have an attitude problem. “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.” (Jeremiah 17:9) For us to listen to God and do what He says requires a change so great that Paul calls it a death—indeed, a very painful death (Galatians 2:20).

Those who have died to self understand that only God has the authority to define right and wrong. All other sources of authority are rebellion against Him. Scripture has authority because it comes from God (2 Timothy 3:16). The people of God love God’s word. “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” (Psalm 119:97). For such people, everything they do is governed by that word.

I have seen strange things even among some Christian people. While they rightly believe that everything the church teaches and practices must be in accordance with God’s word their own lives contradict their claims. They fail to show self-control in how they spend their money or their time; or they fail to control their anger or their lust; or they treat their spouses or their children very differently from what Scripture commands. How is this possible? Somehow they have not come to know God personally; they have not died to self. May each of us truly belong to God and obey His scriptures.

— Ken Williams, Church of Christ  
Bangor, Maine

# GOD'S PLAN FOR A BOAT



From the beginning of time, the battle to serve God has been a struggle. Moses confirms this tragedy: “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Despite all of this ugliness, Noah found favor with God (Genesis 6:8). He preached concerning the coming wrath of God. He was given a pattern to follow.

Patterns are used throughout scripture. There was a pattern for the tabernacle (Exodus 25:9ff). There was a pattern for the Temple which Solomon built (1 Chronicles 28:19). God gave Noah a pattern for the building the ark. Following this pattern would save Noah and his family from the coming judgment (Genesis 6:14-21). God specified all that was to be included, even the type of wood to be used.

There was no room for substitution where God specified. Noah could only use the type of wood commanded. Noah could not change the number of animals that filled the ark. No substitution meant only one entrance to the ark. All that God commanded, Noah obeyed (Genesis 6:22).

The pattern Noah followed prefigured the New Testament church. Like the ark, this church would have a builder: the Son of God (Matthew 16:18). Like the pattern for the ark, the pattern for the church would include specific instructions concern worship (John 4:24), organization (1 Timothy 3), and work (James 1:27). In the same way, Paul reminds us that there is a standard, a pattern, that we must follow. We learn about this “pattern of sound teaching” in God’s word, the New Testament (2 Timothy 1:13). God’s directives must not be changed even today. There cannot be any substitutes where God has commanded.

God has but one way for mankind to be saved from the coming wrath, and that is through water baptism. The apostle Peter wrote: “...who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:20-21).

Will you accept God’s plan for your salvation and your life?



# The Great RESTORATION

Most denominations seek the continuation of their own religious traditions. When some seek to *reform* them they are met with opposition, which results in either division or compromise. The idea of *restoration* is to go beyond religious traditions to the original source of Jesus and the early church based on the New Testament Scripture. The recovery of these ideals can bring about renewal in the life of any individual or congregation.

We turn to the Old Testament for an example of *restoration*. The original message and practices of the people of Israel are found in the first five books in the Bible called the Law of Moses. After the death of Joshua, the leader following Moses, the people abandoned God's Law. "Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served Baals. They forsook the Lord, the God of our ancestors who had brought them out of Egypt" (Judges 2:11-12a). There were some good leaders in the years that followed but in general they led the people astray from the Lord. Israelite religion became a mixture of Canaanite idolatry and the Law of Moses. Things became so bad that all copies of the Word of God were lost. With no written Word of God even those who sincerely sought to worship God could not know if what they were doing was pleasing to Him.

During the reign of King Josiah they discovered a copy of the book of the Law of Moses in the Temple. It was read aloud to the King and the people of Judah. This led to a serious effort to go beyond *reformation* to *restore* important practices that God had commanded. "The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel, and none of the Kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah..." (2 Chronicles 35:18).

The New Testament is the foundation of all Christian beliefs and practices like the Law of Moses was for Israel. Its teachings need to be rediscovered in our day. Instead of reading the Scripture to confirm our religious traditions, we need fresh eyes to read it in its context. This will allow us the opportunity of spiritual renewal by *restoring* the life of the early Church as found in the New Testament.

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing, and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

— Bruce Wadzeck, Church of Christ  
Princeton, New Jersey



# WHEN GOD HAS SPOKEN

Imagine what life would be like if God had not spoken! There would be no standard of morality, no answers to the deepest questions of the heart, no direction for making good decisions and avoiding bad decisions. If God had not spoken, mankind would end up like the ancient Israelites, where every person “did what was right in his own eyes,” which led to the collapse of society and the breakdown in everything that brought order, peace, righteousness and harmony in the world (Judges 17:6). If God had not spoken we would have no way of knowing our sins are forgiven. If God had not spoken there would be no promise of life in the world to come.

**God has spoken to us in Jesus Christ.** “God has spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 11:2). Jesus was the “Word of God” who “became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1:1-14). Is it any wonder that He said: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me” (Matthew 28:18). Jesus promised: “you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32).

**God has spoken to us through the Scripture.** Scripture is useful “for teaching, for reproof, for correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16). Notice the emphasis: Scripture has value for “*teaching*” life’s most valuable lessons. Scripture “*reproves*” our sins. Scripture “*corrects*” error and false beliefs. Scripture “*trains*” us in righteous living. Scripture will “*equip*” us to live the way which pleases God. We are empowered by the Word to be prepared for every act of goodness and righteousness.

I am nearly seventy years old and have witnessed a gradual decline in respect for voice of God revealed in the Scriptures. Societal decay has invaded every area of life beginning in our homes and spreading to our schools, businesses and even to the church. Lack of respect God’s final word to mankind has caused moral decay and spiritual confusion. People are no longer able to distinguish right and wrong. As in Old Testament times, they call “good things evil and evil things good” (Isaiah 5:20).

We do great harm to ourselves, our families, and the church when we fail to recognize and adhere to the authority of the word of God. Without obedience to God sin will abound. The instruction of God is the roadmap for life and godliness. Let us take care how we hear!

— Gary Babcock, Church of Christ  
Coventry, Rhode Island

# WHEN GOD HAS BEEN SILENT



When a pharmacist receives a “script” from the doctor he knows he cannot change the medicine the doctor *specifically* prescribed. Even if the pharmacist thinks that changing the prescription would make the patient feel better, the fact remains that he is obligated to fill the prescription exactly as the doctor gave it. The silence of the doctor does not permit the pharmacist to add to or take away from the prescription.

In a similar way, when God expresses His desires by giving *specific* instructions, He expects His people to do exactly as He commanded. Human beings are not to add to, subtract from or change what He has *specifically instructed*. Neither is it necessary for God to list all the changes people may invent, or to forbid them by stating: “You *must not* do this or that!” If the scripture contained every single thing God did not approve it would be such a large book we would be unable to carry it! The very nature of *specific instructions* means that whatever is not *authorized* by Scripture is not permitted. This is the significance of *specific* instructions.

According to **Leviticus 10:1-2** two priests were put to death because they offered fire on their censers which was “*not authorized.*” God had authorized the divine source for holy fire on the altar, but when these priests obtained fire from another source God destroyed them. God did not *prohibit* priests to get fire from another source, but when they offered “*unauthorized fire*” they displeased God. We should learn from this Biblical example that when God *specifies* what He wants, all changes, additions and subtractions are forbidden by His silence.

In **1 Chronicles 13:7-10**, the Israelites put the Ark of the Covenant on a “new cart” to transport it into Jerusalem. God had not forbidden a “new cart,” but it was a change in what He had *specifically commanded*. The project ended in disaster! King David said: “It was because the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of Him about how to do it in *the prescribed way.*” Only when the Levites carried the Ark of the Covenant with poles resting on their shoulders as God commanded did the mission meet with God’s blessing and success.

Everything taught and practiced in God’s name must be authorized by scripture. Today Christians need to ask if the things practiced in religion truly please God. Are we honoring His *specific* instructions? Since He has specified *immersion* as the mode of baptism, *grape juice and unleavened bread* as the food of communion, *elders* in each congregation as the form of church government, *singing* as the music of worship and Jesus as the *mediator* in prayer, by what authority does anyone change, add to or subtract from what God has authorized? If *one* of God’s *specific* instructions can be changed, they can *all* be changed! God’s silence prohibits all innovations and changes; it does not permit us to ignore His directions.



# WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OLD TESTAMENT?

God had never planned for the Old Testament as a Law to be permanent. It was “put in charge” so we could be “brought to Christ” (Galatians 3:17). God promised Abraham that through his seed all nations on the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-2). The blessing would be given when God sent His Son.

Jacob, whose name was changed to “Israel,” had twelve sons whose descendants ended up as slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Scholars believe these descendants numbered approximately two million souls. How do you guide two million people? There had to be laws! God gave them the Law of Moses, (the Old Covenant) starting with the 10 Commandments so they would be able to operate as a nation. It was to keep them from destroying themselves. God was preserving Israel to bring Christ into the world. The Law that God gave was both religious, ceremonial and moral. It governed the nation. God promised them that if they continued to keep the Law, they would be blessed. If they did not keep God’s Law, there would be curses and death (Deuteronomy 5: 1-21; and chapter 28). Animal sacrifices were made, but could the blood of these animals bring about forgiveness? Those who properly understood the Law realized that there had to be something more.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold the coming of a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31). It was to be different from the Old Covenant. The New would be written on hearts, not on stones. The New would appeal to the heart (Hebrews 8:7-13). When one sees that Christ’s blood was shed for the forgiveness of his sins, it motivates him to shape up and live right.

The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ took effect when Jesus died. “A will (Testament/Covenant) is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living” (Hebrews 9:16-17). The Old Covenant was but a shadow of what was to come (Hebrews 10:1-4). A shadow can’t do very much. The Old Testament was a constant reminder of sins. In the New there is forgiveness. The commandments and regulations of the Old Law were abolished when Christ died (Ephesians 2:14-16). The New does what the Old could not do: reconcile us to God. Which Covenant would you rather live under? The Old Covenant that makes you an alien, separates you from God, and leaves you without hope (Ephesians 2:11-12), or the New Testament that brings unity and forgiveness?

— Larry Krause, Church of Christ  
Athens, Pennsylvania

# **BAPTISM**

## **According to the Bible**



### **ITS 'MODE': IMMERSION IN WATER**

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He *went up out of the water*” (**Matthew 3:16**).  
“As they traveled along the road, they *came to some water*...Then both Philip and the eunuch *went down into the water* and Philip baptized him When they *came up out of the water*.... the eunuch went on his way rejoicing” (**Acts 8:34-39**)  
“We were therefore *buried* with Him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead... we too may live a new life” (**Romans 6:4**)

### **IT'S CANDIDATES: THOSE OLD ENOUGH TO BELIEVE & REPENT**

“When the people heard this, they were *cut to the heart* and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘*Repent* and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ’ (**Acts 2:37-38**).  
“Many of the Corinthians who *heard him believed* and were baptized” (**Acts 18:8**).  
“Having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your *faith* in the power of God” (**Colossians 2:12**).

### **IT'S PURPOSE: FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

“Repent and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the *forgiveness of your sins*” (**Acts 2:37-38**).  
“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and *wash your sins away*, calling on His name” (**Acts 22:16**).  
“This water symbolizes baptism that now *saves* you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God” (**1 Peter 3:21**).  
“No one can *enter the kingdom of God* unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (**John 3:5**).

The promise of forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and entering His kingdom depends on being correctly baptized. Have you been baptized the way the Bible teaches? Would you like to be?

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# "MODERN DAY PROPHETS?"

Is the Bible alone enough? Many religious groups don't think so. They claim to have new revelations from God, something the first apostles did not know. From Mormonism to modern charismatic groups people are taught that God is revealing new things. But is that true? Or is the Bible the complete and authoritative word of God? Let's see what the authenticated word of God, the Bible, says.



The apostle Paul taught: “But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Paul refers to three miraculous gifts of the Spirit which existed in the first century: prophecy, tongues and knowledge. These were to cease when “perfection” came. In context, “perfection” refers to the *completed revelation of the word of God*. The Bible is that *perfect revelation*. Prophecy, tongues, and inspired knowledge ceased when the New Testament scriptures, the full revelation from God, became a reality. Because of the exclusive way that the gift of prophecy was passed on (through the apostles hands, Acts 8:17-19), we conclude with certainty that prophecy must have ended no later than A.D. 150. New revelations of God’s inspired truth ended with the apostolic church.

The book of Revelation sternly warns against adding to or subtracting from God’s word (Revelation 22:18-19). In the book of Galatians we read: “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” (Galatians 1:8-9). Nothing in the Bible needs to be improved through modern-day prophecy.

The Bible gives us every spiritual thing we need. The apostle Peter taught: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3). Paul put it plainly, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). In the first century the content of the Faith had been “once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3).

Modern claims to prophecy are mistaken; the Bible alone gives us everything we need to get to Heaven. The Bible has all the answers for your spiritual questions

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