



Nobility

**“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica,
in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,
and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”
— Acts 17:11**

God Wants You to be Saved!

There are many, even in religious circles, who have questioned whether or not God really wants man to be saved. In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul said God “...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” This verse may be convincing enough for some. However, those who are skeptical might need further evidence. Therefore, consider four biblical reasons that show clearly God wants you to be saved.

First, God put a plan into place that could save mankind. Oftentimes, this is called God’s scheme of redemption. In Acts 2, the Bible says that those on the day of Pentecost were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38-39). In verse 47, the Bible says that God added the saved to the church. Then, in Ephesians 1, Paul by inspiration says that God chose the members of the church before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). The plan for the redemption of mankind was put in place before the world began. The church or body of the saved is not something that some great scholar or theologian invented. It was created in the mind of God. And it originated before time began for mankind. Had it not been for God and His plan, there would be no hope for mankind.

Next, in order for man to be saved, God gave His own Son. John 3:16-17 says, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*” Hebrews 10:4 says the Old Testament way of atoning for sins was never complete. The sacrifices of animals was not enough to remove the sins of man and give man salvation but “...*how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance*” (Hebrews 9:14-15).

Then, God makes the salvation of man a relatively simple process. People must hear the word of God (Romans 10:17) and believe what they have heard (Mark 16:15-16). They then must recognize their sin and repent of them (Luke 13:3, 5). Further, they must confess Jesus to be the Son of God (Acts 8:37) and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). Finally, they must live faithfully unto God for the remainder of their lives (Revelation 2:10). These are the steps that each person must take to get in Christ, and

in Christ are all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). These are the steps each person must take to receive the grace of God. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8).

Finally, God is a God of longsuffering — giving people time to save their souls. Peter said, “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). Have you ever wondered why Christ has not yet come again? The reason may be because God wants to give the people of earth more time. He does not want to see anyone go to hell. He may be delaying the second coming of Christ and the end of time so that you will be saved. The reason why we write articles such as this one is so that more people can be saved. Have you ever wondered why God does not just take a person into heaven when they follow His plan of salvation? One reason is to give new Christians the opportunity to tell others about the saving power of Jesus Christ which they are commanded to do (Matthew 28:18-20). God’s longsuffering and His assigned task for members of His church to teach the lost exists so that more people can be saved.

It sounds obvious, but God indeed wants you to be saved. He initiated a plan of salvation for the sins of mankind. He sent His Son — His only begotten Son — to die so you could one day spend eternity with Him. There is a gospel plan of salvation that He has put in place so you can be saved. He is longsuffering in the second coming of His Son so you can be saved. Yet, it is a sobering reality that none of this makes any difference if you do not want to be saved. A person’s salvation depends solely on what each individual person wants to do. Dear reader, do you care enough about yourself to be saved?

Jeremy Northrop, Ashland, MS

Nobility

is a publication of the West End Church of Christ,
P.O. Box 10892, Conway, AR 72034,
currently meeting in the media center of the
Jim Stone Elementary School, 4255 College Ave., Conway, AR.

Schedule of Services:
Sunday: Bible Class 9:30 A.M., Worship 10:30 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday Bible Class 7:00 P.M.

Please visit our website at <http://www.wecoc.net>

Belief

One of the foundation doctrines of the New Testament is “belief” or as it can also be called “faith.” Jesus said, “...for if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). The inspired author of Hebrews wrote, “But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). These and many other Bible verses clearly set forth the fact that “belief” or “faith” in God and Jesus Christ is essential in order to receive forgiveness of sins, have fellowship with God, and be a Christian. As the Hebrew author states, “it is impossible” to approach God without faith or belief, however, the question arises, biblically speaking what is the nature of belief?

First, biblical “belief” or “faith” is based upon evidence. There are many who speak of a “blind faith” or a “leap of faith” and apply that to biblical faith, but biblical faith is based upon evidence. One believes or has faith because of the evidence, as John wrote, “but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). Notice, “but these are written that ye might believe...” or as evidence “...that ye might believe.” Biblical belief is not a “blind faith,” a “leap of faith,” or a feeling but is based upon evidence and proof.

Second, biblical “belief” or “faith” necessitates one’s personal ability to think, reason, and make a decision with conviction of heart and mind. Paul wrote, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Bible “belief” or

“faith” is the ability to sort out truth from error and then make a decision from the heart whether to accept or reject the truth. Consequently, any doctrine or religious practice, such as infant baptism or baptism by proxy for someone who has already died, circumvents God’s plan for a person comes to God through his or her personal “belief” or “faith.”

Third, biblical “belief” or “faith” necessitates a person’s willingness to obey the will of God from the heart. Not only does biblical “belief” include what takes place in the mind or heart but also obedience to God. Paul wrote to the Romans concerning their belief, “but God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin...” (Romans 6:17). It is evident that their “belief” or “faith,” which included their obedience, brought about their spiritual freedom from sin in Christ.

When Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16), he was teaching not only belief from a mere mental ascent, but all that belief would include as revealed through his own teaching as well as that of the apostles and inspired writers of the New Testament. Belief in Jesus includes repentance of sin (Luke 13:3), confession of Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37), and baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38).

Wayne Brewer, Mabelvale, AR

The Establishment of the Church

If you were asked *where* was the church established, how would you answer? I’m confident we would receive nearly as many answers as people we asked. Some may say Rome, others may say Germany or England, and still others may say various cities in America.

If you were asked *when* was the church established, how would you answer? Again, the answer would probably be as variable as the number of people asked. Answers would range thousands of years before Christ to within the last century.

If you were asked *who* established the church, how would you respond? Some would say Abraham, others would say Jesus, and still others might say Luther, Calvin, Smythe, Wesley, or Miller.

If we really wanted the right answers to these questions, where should we turn? Where should we look to find the correct answers? Since God adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), and since Jesus is the Savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23) which is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23), then the church concerns the salvation of man. And, since the church concerns mankind’s redemption, then its establishment is of utmost importance. So where can we find out about the establishment of the church? In the same place we read about the church — the Bible. So according to the Bible, who established the church, and where and when was it established?

The answer to the first question is Jesus. On the coast of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus promised His disciples He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). That, in itself, ought to answer the question. However, there is more to it. Not only did Jesus promise to build the church, He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). We often think about the blood of Jesus paying the price of sin, but it also paid the price for the church. For this reason, when sin is wiped away, God adds the saved to the church. Now let’s apply this. Paul wrote,

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Second question: When was the church established? The church was established on Pentecost fifty days after the death of Christ. Notice this: (1) Jesus promised the kingdom was at hand (Matthew 4:17). (2) Jesus promised to build His church, and this would come to fruition when Peter was given the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19). (3) Jesus promised there would be some who would not taste of death until they see the kingdom (Mark 9:1). (4) Jesus promised at the institution of the Lord’s supper that He would not drink the fruit of the vine with His disciples until the kingdom came (Matthew 26:29). (5) Jesus promised the kingdom would “come with power” (Mark 9:1). When did all of these things come to pass? The Jewish holiday of Pentecost fifty days after the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2). It was near to the time of Jesus’ preaching. The church was built upon Peter’s proclamation of Christ (Acts 2:14), and God added those who were saved to the church (Acts 2:41,47). It came during the lifetime of those to whom Jesus spoke. After its establishment, the disciples partook of the Lord’s supper (Acts 2:42), and it came with power (Acts 2:2-4). Thus, the church was established on Pentecost of AD 30 as recorded in Acts 2.

Finally, where was the church established? Since the Bible teaches the church was established on the day of Pentecost, then the where is simple — the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2:5).

Are you a member of a church established by Jesus in the city of Jerusalem fifty days after His death? Do you want to learn more about the church Jesus established, then please write for a free copy of my book, “Biblically Speaking about the Church” (Conway residences only).

Chuck Northrop, Conway, AR

CHILDREN'S DAY CARE: HELP AND/OR HINDRANCE?

A Definition: Webster's New World College Dictionary defines *day care* as "daytime care given to preschool children or to school children after school or during vacation, as at a day-care center, or to the elderly, as at a social agency or a nursing home."

A Demand: The Bible obligates men and women who choose to marry and to bear children to "bring them up" and to do so "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Husbands and fathers have the responsibility of providing for their own families, whether aged parents or young children. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). Wives and mothers have the responsibility "to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:4) and to be "keepers at home... that the word of God be not blasphemed" (verse 5). They are to "guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1 Timothy 5:14). Mothers, in order "to love their children" properly and to see "that the word of God be not blasphemed," must be "keepers at home" which involves keeping one's children at home. Mothers, in order "to love their children" properly and "give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully," must "guide the house" which involves guiding one's children.

A Development: Sometimes and for various reasons, situations will develop wherein the mother will not be able to provide proper care for her children. In such situations someone else is needed to provide necessary care to and for her children (whether preschool or school age). It may be provided by a relative, a close friend, or even a day care facility. Concerning these developments, day care can be a great help.

A Danger: However, some mothers are in danger of not exhibiting proper love for their children. Some mothers are in danger of causing the word of God to be blasphemed. Some mothers are in danger of giving occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. Some mothers are not keepers at home as demanded of God. Some mothers do not guide the house as demanded by the Word of God. Some mothers have turned their God given obligations and responsibilities concerning their own children over to other people and other institutions including day care facilities. They do so not because such is needed and/or necessary but because they choose to do so in order that they can satisfy their own selfish desires and lusts. The Bible warns men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers against this danger, saying: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

A Duty: Getting married and having children is for husbands and wives who love God (Matthew 22:37) and one another (Ephesians 5:22-33). It is for fathers and mothers who love and care for their children enough to properly oversee their intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social development (Luke 2:52). May God help all parents to recognize and respond to their parental duties concerning the care of their children. And when such care involves day care for their children, may such be used only as a help and never as a hindrance.

David B. Watson, Sapulpa, OK

A Bible Response To Homosexuality

The subject of homosexuality is being thrust upon our society. Attempts continue to legalize same-sex marriage. Concerted efforts have made inroads in our schools and throughout society to recognize this lifestyle as a "sexual orientation" instead of what it is, a "sexual preference." But if we have concern for God, our position on this lifestyle is not based on man's preferences or society's acceptance but on God's commands. And the fact is, God has always condemned homosexuality. Notice the following passages:

- Genesis 19:4-8 – to desire homosexual relations is to act "wickedly."
- Leviticus 18:22 – to "lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination."
- Romans 1:24-27 – homosexuality is called many things: uncleanness, lusts, dishonor, vile affections, against nature, leaving the natural use, unseemly, error. None of which indicates approval nor anything "gay."
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – the terms "effeminate" (males who submit their bodies to lewd and unnatural acts) and "abusers of themselves with mankind" (unnatural sex acts) apply to homosexuality. Paul notes that such are "unrighteous" and will not enter heaven.
- Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6 – God's plan for the family has been heterosexual from the beginning, man and woman to be joined by Him

With it so clear in the scriptures that God condemns homosexuality, what should our reaction be?

- **Be Concerned. Souls are at stake!** The sanctity and protection of the family and even the future of society is at stake! *There is a "homosexual agenda"* in which you, your children, and your grandchildren are targeted to be encouraged to accept homosexuality. We must speak God's truth in love and not stand idly by.
- **Encourage Repentance.** Homosexuality is not a "sexual orientation," it is a choice, and it is a sin. As such, we should lovingly seek to restore such people (Galatians 6:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:1-4). "*Gay bashing*" is not an option. *Those who love God and men's souls will seek to convert, not bash.* If you know those engaged in this sin, seek to educate them to God's will and encourage them to turn to God. In 1 Corinthians 6:11, we are told that those who were guilty of homosexuality changed ("such were some of you") — *and they can still change today.*

My friend, many objections are offered in defense of homosexuality. Some will tell you it has a genetic cause. There is no proof for such, but even if there was, God still says it is wrong. This same claim is often made for alcoholism, but do we leave the alcoholic alone? Others say they aren't hurting anyone else, so leave them alone. Such an argument is also made for prostitution and drugs. Do we fall for it then? Perhaps the strongest argument is "I have the right to choose." Sadly, such is true. God has always allowed man to choose between right or wrong. But if I love God, if I love the souls of man, if I love society — I will do all I can to encourage them to make the right choice.

Jack H. Williams, Independence, MO

Study the Bible by Mail!

FREE BIBLE STUDY COURSE!

- * Study the Bible in the privacy of your home at your own pace.
- * Learn what the Bible says and does not say.
- * Based solely on the Bible — completely undenominational.
- * Absolutely no cost or obligation.
- * Just send your name and mailing address to: FREE BIBLE STUDY COURSE, P.O. 10892, Conway, AR 72034.



LECTURESHIP

March 4–6, 2005

Speaking the Truth in Love...

Friday 7 P.M. "....about Authority."
 Friday 8 P.M. . . . "....about the Church of the Bible."
 Saturday 10 A.M. . . . "....about Pain and Suffering."
 Saturday 11 A.M. "....about the Work of the Church."
 Saturday 1:30 P.M. "....about Morality"
 Saturday 2:30 P.M. "....about Heaven and Hell"
 Sunday 9:30 A.M. "....about Worship"
 Sunday 10:30 A.M. "....about Your Soul's Salvation"
 Sunday 5 P.M. "....about Fellowship."
 Sunday 6 P.M. "....about Denominationalism."

West End Church of Christ

P.O. Box 10892
Conway, AR 72034

Non-Profit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Conway, AR
 Permit No. 105

POSTAL PATRON
CONWAY, AR 72034



“What Is the Significance of Christ Being Born of a Virgin?”

The significance of Christ’s birth has led many to wonder with awe while causing others to stand in skepticism and reject the Bible, Christianity, and Christ Himself — albeit without good reason. The one who ponders the power of the Christ must connect it with the baby Jesus, the eventual Savior of the world, with His most miraculous conception and birth. To ask this question is to consider the nature of

Christ’s character and everyone’s salvation. These two things are contingent upon the validity of Jesus’ virgin birth. To ask this question, consider the true significance, and deduce the right answer from the Bible is to walk away with a greater appreciation of many things regarding the salvation born by a man — God Almighty *in the flesh*, who truly was conceived miraculously and *literally* begotten by the God of creation (John 1:1-5, 14; 3:16; Galatians 4:4; 1 John 1:1-5 et al.).

Paul wrote that in the fullness of *the* time, God *sent* Christ to us, born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). The birth of Christ, then, was *not* subject to any human merit. First, God sent Christ but how? Natural child birth occurs according to natural laws with God giving children their spirits at conception, but this is not a miraculous event (Numbers 16:22; 27:26; Job 12:10; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Isaiah 57:16; Jeremiah 1:5; Zechariah 12:1; Hebrews 12:9 et al.). Christ is eternal in spirit; therefore, He was not the same as all children (mankind) who have their spirits given at conception by God. Jesus was born an infant, a child, but we must see Him as the Lord, as God full of grace and truth (Luke 2:40; John 1:1-5, 14, 16-17). This is why Christ was born of a virgin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:31-35). It is not unnatural to ask how this could be. Mary herself, the mother, a virgin, asked: “*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*” However, it is a most marvelous fact that God *sent* or *gave* His only begotten Son into the world to save it from sin and disarray (John 3:16-17). This was a miraculous event that one cannot explain but cannot deny.

A picture of Christ’s humility in birth and life is seen in Philippians 2:5-8. This is a key to understanding Christ being equal with God — Deity in the flesh, Himself being God — made in the likeness or fashion of a man (verse 8). Humility is the key to why God sent His only begotten Son into the world. Through this process, God expressed His humility! Therefore, because of grace, Christ was born. Further, God sent His Son into the world to die (2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:15). This is truly amazing and deduced from the fact that Christ was born of a virgin, to live a humble obedient life to the will of His Father. He was truly full of grace and truth (John 1:14, 16-17).

Second, Paul expressed that it was in the “*fullness of the time*” when Christ was come. This too is significant to the virgin birth. The fact that this

event was foreseen in a previous time, before Paul’s time, is relevant to the significance of the virgin birth. Isaiah the prophet of Israel and Old Testament Judaism saw the Lord before His birth (Isaiah 9:6). He prophesied of this event (Isaiah 7:14). His prophecy occurred some seven hundred years before the actual event. Matthew tells us, in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, Jesus was born of a virgin to fulfill this prophecy *specifically* (Matthew 1:21-23). Now, this then solidifies and confirms God’s word as true. Therefore, we can “know that we know” and walk by faith according to the absolute salvation granted because of Christ’s life and death on the cross (cf. 1 John 1:1-4; 2:1-3). Skeptics and liberal translators that reject this absolute truth deny themselves salvation and also reject God’s word as true. Jesus was born in the right time according to prophecy. There was no mistake about this in the mind of the eternal God. In fact, prophecy surrounding the birth of the Savior first appeared in the beginning (Genesis 3:15). The “seed of a woman” would defeat the seed of Satan, which He did (cf. Revelation 12:9). That seed, in the beginning, Paul tells us was Christ (Galatians 3:16). Christ in the fullness of time was born of a virgin signifying fulfillment of God’s word of hope. In part, redemption hinged upon this factor.

Finally, if Jesus was not born of the virgin, then what part of deity would be represented on the cross of Calvary? If Joseph, his natural father, was actually able to state, “He was *my* only begotten Son,” then who or what would our salvation be based upon? It would be difficult to understand the Deity of Christ, the one and only suitable sacrifice for our sins (cf. Psalm 49:7-8; Isaiah 53; John 1:29) if his birth was merely of natural laws/birth. But, it was not. Christ was born of the virgin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He lived a sinless, spotless life that no one can do or perfectly parrot as merely men in the flesh (1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-3). Christ was born and lived so that all men can live. His life is our perfect example. We must place our trust in His redemption because of such (Psalm 130:7-8).

Jesus, because of His virgin birth, can claim that He and the Father are truly one (John 5:17-18). The virgin born Savior — 100% God in the flesh, but 100% man too — suffered, bled, and died the physical death of all, so that He could conquer such. This is significant to the virgin birth of Christ. Without this factor, we would perhaps be able to place Christ on an equal par with every *self proclaimed* redeemer, prophet, or soothsayer naturally born. Christ, though, is not in that category. He was **the** Savior of the world, in part, because of His most significant birth. That which was born of Mary was called **the Son of God** because of the virgin birth; He is the Savior of the World (Luke 1:35). Through Adam, we fail, but through Christ, we live (Romans 5:12-15). Truly grace hung on that cross, having humbled Himself to such a death (2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:15). Nevertheless by this, we can be saved today. God’s grace truly does save if we will receive and obey such (John 1:12). The virgin birth is just one more factor of grace, or unmerited favor, extended from God. The virgin birth was in fact a part of God’s free gift (Romans 6:23).

Bryan R Braswell, Roanoke, TX