Stop! Look! Reason!

Written by

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That God expects man to use his reasoning faculties is evident from this scripture, "*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" (Isa. 1:18). We are to reason together with the Lord, not **against** Him. How can we do this? God has placed the result of His reasoning on the pages of the Bible. He expects us to use our intelligence to reason concerning what is in that book. If we reason in harmony with what that book teaches, our conclusion is sure to be correct. Of course, you have already seen that I am writing this article for the consideration of men and women who believe that the Bible is a Devine revelation. It would require a separate article for the one who does not believe the Bible divine.

In order to understand the plan of salvation contained in the Bible, it is necessary for us to know how to study and rightly divide the Word. The apostle Paul, writing to a young preacher, Timothy, said, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" (2 Tim. 2:15).

No preacher need be ashamed who rightly divides the word and teaches it as he can read it.

As to the division of the Word, God made two Wills (Testaments). The first was the Old Testament and the second is the New Testament. As it is a principle of law that two wills (testaments) cannot be in force at the same time and that the last will supersedes all other wills, so the New Testament supersedes the Old and only the New is law to govern God's people today. Turn with me to Heb. 10:9-10, "*Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" This should satisfy every reasoning being that the New Testament is the one which we must obey to have divine assurance of going to heaven. Matt. 7:21, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*"

We do the will of God when we **obey** the commands contained in that will. The Saviour in John 17:17 asks God to sanctify the disciples through the Truth. The New Testament is called Truth: "*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*" (John 1:17). But we must obey the commands contained in the truth that was given us by Jesus Christ if we are to be pure or sanctified. "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*" (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

We may pause here to consider who can **do** the will of God: only persons who can be taught to understand the commands of that will. Can infants? We all know they cannot reason with God while they are infants. What then will become of them if they die in their infancy? Let Christ answer: "*And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matt. 18:3). When grown persons are converted (changed) and become as little children they are fit for the kingdom of heaven. "*But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matt. 19:14). Some of our friends say that all children are sinners. Let us reason a little. If all children are sinners, then the Saviour's statement in Matt. 18:3 would mean this: "Except ye be converted and become as "**sinners**" (if children are sinners) ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Little children are **safe** until they are old enough to know right from wrong as revealed in the New Testament, then they are accountable and need to do God's will.

What things must the responsible person do in order to have God's promise of heaven? Matt. 28:18-20, "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy*

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

What were they to teach and why were they to teach it? "*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" (Mark 16:15-16). So we are to preach the gospel. We are to preach it to create faith. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Rom. 10:17). We can believe evidence concerning facts. The facts of Christ's life are recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are recorded that persons who read may believe. "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 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 20:30-31).

Faith

Without faith we can do nothing that will please God. "*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.*" (Heb. 11:6). But faith alone will not save. "*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*" (James 2:19-20). Verse 24, "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*"

Also, whatsoever we do in our religious work if it is not of faith is wrong. "*... for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*" (Rom. 14:23). But someone may say that only includes the eating of meats. Not so. It is true that Paul was discussing the eating of meat. He said that if a man eats meat when he doubts that eating meat is right then he is damned. Why? Because **WHATSOEVER** is not of faith is sin. And if eating meat is not of faith, it is included in the **WHATSOEVER** and therefore is a sin. But how does faith come? "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Rom. 10:17). What part of the word of God produces our faith? The Old Testament or the New? That which came through the teachings of Christ. "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...*" (Heb. 12:2). Faith is contrasted with the Law in Gal. 3:23-26, "*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" Now, one more scripture to show that God does not instruct us how to be saved by the Old Testament. "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;*" (Heb. 1:1-2).

As all the faith that we have concerning the plan of salvation is based upon the teachings of the New Testament, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin; therefore, whatsoever is not taught in the New Testament is wrong for all professed followers of Christ to do. We will go further into this point later on in considering another scripture.

Repentance

What is repentance? "*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.*" (Matt. 21:28-29). He changed his mind and went. Repentance is a change of mind. It will lead to a change of life. Is it necessary? Hear Paul in Acts 17:30-31, "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*" If a man has lived only for the pleasures of this life, and through the reading or the hearing the gospel, changes his mind about what he will live for, he has repented. If he follows that repentance through life he will live for eternal things and not only for those which are temporal.

Confession

A confession of faith in Christ is as necessary as faith itself. Matt. 10:32, "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*"

How is this confession made? "*For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:10).

What is the confession that is to be made? Verse 9 of this same chapter tells what is to be confessed: "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*"

Where do we have an example of making that confession? Acts 8:35-38, "*Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.*"

In this short scripture we have briefly stated the whole work of making a Christian of an individual. The first thing was to preach Jesus to the man to create faith. After he heard the preaching he changed his mind (repented) about how he would live from then on. Then he confessed his faith in Christ and was baptized. He went on his way rejoicing because he had become saved.

Baptism

Baptism is the last step to be taken to become a new man in Christ. It is as necessary as faith or repentance. The Bible teaches all that we need to know about it.

Who is subject to baptism? Not people who are not capable of believing. "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" (Mark 16:16).

Faith, repentance and confession are steps toward salvation and come before baptism. Baptism is the last step and puts one where there is salvation. Webster says the word "Unto" or "To" means toward a state or condition. Now note these passages of scripture: Rom. 10:10, "*For with the heart man believeth **UNTO** righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made **UNTO** salvation.*" 2 Cor. 7:10, "*For godly sorrow worketh repentance **TO** salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*" A man then believes toward righteousness. He repents toward salvation. He confesses toward salvation, but is not yet saved.

Baptism is the step that puts one into the place where salvation is. Gal. 3:27, "*For as many of you as have been baptized **INTO** Christ have put on Christ.*" Here the Holy Spirit did not use the word "unto" as indicating that baptism was a step "toward" Christ, but the word "INTO", showing that when a person is baptized he is completely in Christ. Now, if Christ is where salvation is, then we are saved when we are in Him. Col. 1:13-14, "*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us **INTO** the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*" If we have forgiveness of sins in Christ; and if baptism puts us into Christ, then we have forgiveness of sins when we are baptized.

That is why the Holy Spirit, speaking through the inspired preacher as recorded in Acts 22:16, said, "*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*"

That baptism does save and that it is water baptism is evident from this scripture in 1 Pet. 3:20-21, "*Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*"

Now, this teaches that eight souls were saved by **WATER**. And that this salvation by water was a figure of the baptism that now saves us. So, we are compelled to conclude that it is water baptism.

But some say that this scripture teaches that we have a GOOD conscience before baptism. It says "*the answer of a good conscience*" is baptism. Before we have an answer we always have a QUESTION. The

word "OF" often means "CONCERNING". A history "OF" the U. S. is a history "CONCERNING" the U. S. Then baptism is the answer concerning a good conscience. The question of a good conscience was asked on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:37, "*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart,*(their conscience hurt them and they wished to clear it) *and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" There was the QUESTION. Acts 2:38, "*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" Repentance and baptism were included in the ANSWER. So peter said baptism was the answer of a good conscience toward God.

How is that baptism administered? Paul calls it a BURIAL. Rom. 6:4, "*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" It requires **MUCH** water. John 3:23, "*And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, **because there was much water there**: and they came, and were baptized.*" It requires a going down into the water. Acts 8:38, "*And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and **they went down both into the water**, both Philip and the eunuch; **and he baptized him**.*" When Christ was baptized He went **into** the water and **came up** out of it. Matt. 3:16, "*And Jesus, when **he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water**: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*"

Baptism is not a pure English word but is a changed form of the Greek word "*baptizo*". Wherever the word is translated from the Greek it is translated "dip, plunge, immerse, bathe, or dye as to dye clothe by dipping it in colored water. In the Living Oracles translation of the New Testament and in the Emphatic Diaglott which gives both the Greek text and the literal translation, the word immerse is used instead of baptize. If Christ had wanted us to be sprinkled he would have used the Greek word "Rhantidso".

Paul says in Eph. 4:5, "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*" He says in Rom. 6:4 that it is a burial, "*Therefore we are **buried with him by baptism** into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" Are we satisfied with what the word of God says on the question, or would we rather take the doctrine of men? The worship that is in accord with the doctrine of men will be in vain and will not give us eternal happiness. Matt. 15:9, "*But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*"

The Church

We come now to the question of the church. Is it necessary to be a member of a church to have the divine promise of going to heaven?

If it is necessary, which church is the right one?

In the 2nd chapter of Acts we have a record where three thousand who were baptized were added to the church. Verse 47, "*... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" This one verse proves that those that should be saved were added to the church. Then if those that should be saved were added to the church, those that were not added to the church should not be saved. It proves that the divine recorder considered church membership necessary to a promise of salvation.

Which church is the one to which the Lord added the saved? It had to be in existence at that time or the Lord could not have **added** the three thousand to it. Then any church that came into existence hundreds of years after that time could not be the right one. "Are not all the churches right?" I am writing this article for those who profess to believe that the Bible is God's word. Then to the Bible we must turn to find if more than one church is taught therein. Eph. 4:4, "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*" Eph. 1:22-23, "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*" 1 Cor. 12:27, "*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*" These three references teach **ONE** body; that body is the **CHURCH**, and it is the **BODY** (**CHURCH**) of Christ.

In Matt. 16:18 the Saviour said, "*... upon this rock I will build my church...*" It is Christ's church; the one He purchased with His blood. Acts 20:28, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with*

his own blood." Is it right to call it by any other name than the one used in the book? Acts 4:12, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*"

But someone says, "Are we not all going to heaven, but traveling different ways?" Let us appeal to God's will. John 14:5-6, "*Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

The writer wishes that all mankind would be saved, but believing the Bible is God's revelation to man; I dare not teach differently from what it teaches on any Bible subject.

How may persons today know which is the right church? If you were looking for an individual of whom you had a perfect description and knew his name, how would you know when you had found him? You certainly would not accept a person as the proper one who did not have the right name and was not exactly like the description. The Bible describes the church of Christ perfectly. It gives its organization; it gives its name; it tells everything it taught and practiced. When you have found a church that has the same organization the New Testament church had, and teaches and practices as the New Testament church taught and practiced, that church is the church of Christ.

Any church that does not meet these requirements has no right to claim it is the church of Christ.

The early church had only two sets of officers: bishops and deacons.

The evangelist was not an officer but was a general preacher who had charge of a congregation until officers were chosen.