


One Heart


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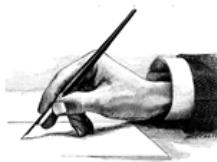
The Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ

Brian Berry

Since it is a fact that the God of the universe actually manifested Himself in the flesh to His creation (John 1:14), it follows then that His time on earth would be eternally significant. And since He ascended from this earthly realm after only about 33 years (Acts 1:9-11), it seems even more significant that since He left something behind that mankind would be even more obligated to not only listen but adhere. This, of course, magnifies the immeasurable value of the “last will and testament” of Jesus Christ. The role of this will in the lives of mankind on earth carries ultimate authority. Here are some thoughts for consideration.

When is a will written? Wills are written during the lifetime of the testator. In fact, the testator basically lives the will until the time comes to draft the document that will continue their wishes long after they are gone. So Jesus Christ, the Son of God, wrote the initial remarks of His will during His lifetime on earth. We can see this in the work of the four gospels. We can also see how the preliminary teachings of Christ set the precedent for His complete will that would be presented afterward to the entire human family (John 16:12-13).

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The Editorial Pen

The Church: The Most Important Institution In The Whole World

The word church is used today in many ways! Some regard the word as out dated, useless and has no place in the modern world. While others who read the New Testament, see that it has some importance, but is in need of a major makeover; still others are not sure just what to make of the church. Therefore, the words under which this “Editorial” is being written must come as a total surprise to many!

Generally speaking, there are three institutions: 1) the family, the foundation of civilized society; 2) the government, the agency for keeping order in society civilized; and 3) the church, the spiritual home of the saved. There is a fourth institution that is generally over looked, that of labor, which supplies the physical needs of the family and keeps the government operating and through which the church is supported. However, there is but one of these that can be truthfully said that it is blood purchased and that by the precious blood of Jesus Christ and this is the church.

Why is so little thought given to this subject is beyond me! The apostle Paul said: “... the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28); then, he would write: “... Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph.

5:23); then he continued: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for her” (Eph. 5:25). These words cannot be written of any other institution in the whole world! This fact, makes the church more precious than any other institution in the whole world!

To speak lightly of the church is to speak lightly of the blood of Christ! To speak reproachfully of the church is to speak reproachfully of the love of Christ! These truths make every word written about the church, in prophecy in the Old Testament and in fact in the New Testament, as important as the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God! But, how many of us think in such words? Few indeed!

No, we think of the church as a toy to be played with, changed at every whim; as though the church has no real purpose! Yet, Paul wrote of her that there is something that: “might be known by the church,” which is “According to the eternal purpose” of God. Now, with these two phrases in mind, notice the context in which they appear: “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world (Greek “aiōn” which may be translated, “age”, thus, referring the age of Moses) hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:9-11). Therefore, we need, no we must understand the church as God does! If we see the blood of Jesus, we must see the church!

Is the local church always as it should be? No! Are elders always as they should be? No! Are deacons always as they should be? No! Is the song leader always as he should be? No! Does the person who leads the "opening" prayer do so always as he should? No! Does singing always sound as it should? No! But, my brethren these and other negatives do not give us reason or authority to change the church as prophesied of in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament by the inspired writers! No it is not ours to play with! The

church of Christ as "one body," and "the churches of Christ" located throughout the world belong to Christ by reason of purchased and the price paid for her was his blood!

If you are not getting anything out of the worship; then do as Paul wrote of the one taking the Lord's Supper: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:28-29). The principle of "let a man examine himself" and "discerning" is applicable to every act of worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

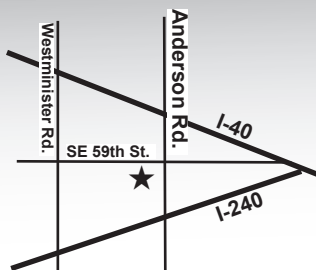
Don't play with the church purchased with the blood of Christ! To her the Lord adds all that are saved (Acts 2:47) and all that will be delivered to the Father in the end of time (1 Cor. 15:24). Yes, the church is the greatest institution in the whole world!

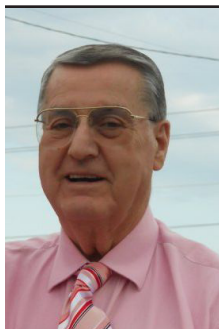


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Chris Hill, instructor





While Men Slept

Ted Knight

MATT. 13:24-30

When I was a youngster I grew up in a Northeast Arkansas cotton patch. I know first hand the toil, sweat, and expense that went into making a crop to feed a family of 10 people and provide the other necessities of life for them. I know how hard the farmer worked to prepare the soil, plant the seed, fertilize the ground, and wait for the seed to spring up to produce a crop.

I know of the strenuous labor and the added expenses that the farmer had to employ to cultivate and tend those tender plants and try to eliminate the weeds and grass so that he would have a more bountiful harvest. I've walked barefoot on hot, hard, ground under a blazing sun, chopping the weeds and grass out of that cotton, only to see a big rain come and the weeds and grass return with a passion. It took diligent, persistent effort to keep that field as clean as possible and sometimes you would think that you were fighting a losing battle. But, you kept on working because you wanted and needed the best crop possible.

I have thought of how terrible it would have been if one night while the farmer slept an enemy came and sowed Johnson grass seed over his entire field.

Before the farmer would know it, that grass would completely cover the field and the cotton could hardly be seen. How sad---how tragic.

In Romania I have seen beautiful fields of Sunflowers or Corn ready soon to be harvested. Then, one night while the farmer slept, bands of thieves would come through in a wagon train and harvest his entire crop and be gone before the morning came. All of his work was in vain and the winter months were terribly difficult because of what the enemy had done while the farmer slept.

In MATTHEW 13 we find the parable of the tares. The lesson that is taught is that 'WHILE MEN SLEPT' the enemy sought to destroy the farmers' crop.

I see in this parable a lesson far more important than the loss of Corn or Sunflowers. I see a lesson about Spiritual things that needs to shake us out of our sleep and make us see what has been done and continues to be done by Satan and his friends in society and in the Lord's church.

In the beginning of the New Testament church, Christians were diligent in the sowing of the Seed of the kingdom and it brought forth good fruit. But, it wasn't long until men came sowing corrupt seed and the results were horrible. Since that time men have continued to sow....good seed and bad seed. Unfortunately, more bad seed has been

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sown than good seed and we see the results all around us.

- Parents became so busy making a living that they ignored the needs of their children and allowed them to be raised without adequate instruction and direction from the word of God. Now the finger of blame is pointed at the schools and churches for the arrogance and disrespect of our young people.

- Hollywood has sown the seeds of immorality and ungodliness through movies, television, and other media and has corrupted the minds of millions, especially of our young people. Adultery, Fornication, Alcoholism, drug abuse, smoking, dancing, disrespect for marriage and family, the approval of same sex unions, ignoring authority at all levels, and many other forms of unrighteousness abound because while we slept the devil has had a field day.

- As of APRIL 25, 2007 approximately 48,589,993 murders have been committed since 1973 and not one person has been held responsible for them because they were done 'legally' by killing unborn babies.

- Illegal use of drugs represents one of the most tragic problems that we have in our country and throughout the world.

- Our 'ROLE MODELS' in most cases are vulgar, ungodly, entertainers and athletes who have absolutely no respect for what is good and decent. They are constantly before the young people in our society and idolized by many, in spite of their total disregard for what is right, good, and sacred.

- The leadership in our world and our country has been so blind to what is right that many of them have been driven out of office in disgrace because of their sinful practices. Regrettably many continue to supposedly lead us but they are in reality misleading us and we will reap the

horrible consequences unless we wake up.

- The high rate of crime, the spread of sexual diseases, the acceptance and endorsement of 'alternate lifestyles' which involve Homosexuality, living together outside of marriage, and other such problems have become such a part of our world that we just accept it as nothing worthy of our attention.

But, not only have the seeds of corruption and damnation been sown in the world, I am very sad to know that similar seeds of corruption have been sown in the Lord's church.

We have had some wonderful men and women through the history of the church who sowed good seed and the church flourished because of it. The early church grew very rapidly because Christians went from 'house to house' teaching the word of God and they did it 'daily'. In the early years of my life it was a pleasure to sit at the feet of Sowers like E.R. Harper, V.E. Howard, Rue Porter, Guy N. Woods, and scores of others who sowed the seed of the kingdom with passion, knowledge, wisdom, and ability. It was this kind of work that enabled the church to be among the very fastest growing religious bodies in the entire country. What a joy it was to attend gospel meetings where 20-50 would be baptized into Christ because the preaching of the gospel was plain and delivered in love.

However, it seems to me that in the late 1960's and early 1970's we began to doze a little. Our buildings were full, our contribution plates were more than

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sufficiently filled, missionaries were supported with our checks, the needy were blessed with our assistance, and all was well. We busied ourselves with making money, building bigger barns, and saying to ourselves, "Eat, Drink, and be merry..." Now, look with me at what has happened.

We woke up and discovered that the enemy had come and had been effective in sowing bad seed and seriously wounded the precious Bride of Christ. In the past 40 years the church has been quietly attacked from within and without and today we have a seriously sick Body desperately in need of repair. Why do I say that? "By their fruits ye shall know them", the Bible says, and I see the fruit to support what I have just said.

- Many of our Christian homes have been destroyed by divorce and instead of preaching the clear teaching of the word of God on this subject we have heard and accepted false doctrine or just tried to ignore the problem because we were afraid that we might hurt someone's feelings. Brother Roy Deaver said some years ago that if we did not teach what the Bible plainly teaches about marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the church would become a hotbed of adulterers. Was he wrong in his assessment? I am afraid not and that makes me very sad.

- We have sent our children off to youth rallies without knowing what they were being taught and later seemed surprised when they wandered off into denominationalism with their friends. We turned the teaching and training of our young people over to the 'Youth Minister' and some of them misled our

young people instead of guiding them into all truth. We parents should have been the 'Youth Ministers' and known who was teaching them and what they were being taught.

- While we were sleeping an epidemic swept through our brotherhood causing men to disregard the authority of the word of God and accept a mixture of seed that was good and seed that was polluted by the doctrines of men.

- While we were sleeping, false teachers entered in among us and convinced some that women should be used in the leadership of the church in total disregard of plain biblical teaching regarding the woman's role in the church.

- While we slept men and women who have more interest in being entertained than in worshipping God in spirit and in truth, have brought unscriptural practices into the worship services and divided congregations all over the country. Special singing groups, solos, observing the Lord's Supper at times not authorized in the Bible, etc. has turned the worship service into a spectator event rather than a time of worshipping and praising God as we have been instructed.

- While we have slept some of the largest congregations among us have adopted the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship and led our brethren into apostasy again.

- While we slept a spirit of compromise with the world has infiltrated the Lord's church until it is impossible to see the difference in some congregations of the church of Christ and the denominations in the world.

- While we slept Satan effectively introduced many of our brethren to the idea that what we needed is more recreational and social activities and we have spent untold millions of the Lord's dollars building gymnasiums and other



Greek and the **ΣΟΦΙΑ** *of God*

There are three English words that cause confusion in our interpretation of the Scriptures. We will consider one English word that causes confusion in this brief article. The English word “hearing” causes confusion for some Bible students. Other English words will be considered in later articles.

Definitions from English Sources

The word “hearing” can be either a verb or a noun in English. “vb. ... **1:** to perceive or apprehend by the ear. **2:** to gain knowledge by hearing **3a:** to listen to with attention: HEED ... **4a:** to give a legal hearing to ...” (Merriam Webster)

“n. ... **1a:** the process, function, or power of perceiving sound: specif: the special sense by which noises and tones are received as stimuli ... **2a:** opportunity to be heard to present one’s side of a case, or to be generally known or appreciated **b (1):** a listening to arguments **(2) :** a preliminary examination in criminal procedure ...” (Merriam Webster)

The Greek Noun ἀκοή

The Greek noun ἀκοή (pronounced akoē) is translated “hearing” in several passages. This word is found 24 times in the New Testament (in 22 different verses). It is variously translated: fame, hearing, rumours, ears, audience, re-

port, which ye heard, and preached in the KJV.

ἀκοή “**1.** *hearing*, by which one perceives sounds; *sense of hearing*... **2.** *the organ of hearing, the ear* ... **3.** *thing heard;* **a.** *instruction*, namely oral; spec. *the preaching of the gospel* ... **b.** *hear-say, report, rumor* ...” (Thayer, p. 22) Strong’s # G189

Various Passages That are Misunderstood

The first passage that causes problems in interpretation is Acts 28:26.

Acts 28:26 (ASV) saying, Go thou unto this people, and say, By hearing (noun) ye shall hear (verb), and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive:

Paul makes the point that they will hear (verb) the hearing (the message – noun), but would not understand what it meant. They would not understand the message because their ears were dull of hearing (verb – Acts 28:27).

The second passage that causes problems in interpretation is Rom. 10:16-17.

Rom. 10:16 (ASV) But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report (noun)? 17 So belief cometh of hearing (noun), and hearing (noun)

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facilities to accommodate our worldly minded brethren.

- While we slept many, many, of our mission efforts have declined and the number of missionaries has decreased dramatically as our interests have turned inward instead of outward to the lost people of our world.

- While we slept many men have been placed in the office of the Shepherd without the slightest idea what a Shepherd is to do.

- While we slept some of our own brethren have declared that baptism is not required in order to obtain salvation or that baptism in any denomination is acceptable to the Lord. God's plan and purpose for baptism is clear and it is difficult to misunderstand and we must begin to emphasize it with great urgency.

I could go on and on. It is heart breaking to see what has happened among us and what had been brought into an unconscious church by men who are wolves in sheep's clothing. But, if you have been half awake for the past few years you are already aware of these things.

The question is: "WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?" It may be hard to see the cotton for the Johnson grass, but the cotton is still there. It is high time for men and women who love the Lord and His church to arise and with diligence and determination begin to clean up the fields and save the crop. It is time for those who are asleep, to AWAKE!

EPH. 5:14-16; ROM. 13:11; I PET. 5:8-9; 1 COR. 15:33-34; I COR. 16:13; Acts 20:28-31; EPH. 6:10-20.

Brethren, it is time for us to let it be

known that the large, compromising, Johnson grass churches among us are not going to destroy the church which Jesus purchased with His own blood. It is time for this 'Sleeping Giant' known as the church of Christ to come to life and tell the world, "We may have been sleeping but we are not dead and we are going to wake up and get to work!"
DOING WHAT?

- Sowing the Pure Seed of the KINGDOM.

- Getting rid of the JOHNSON GRASS by Exercising CHURCH DISCIPLINE in LOVE when it is NEEDED.

- Teaching and Training those who are coming AFTER US to be GOOD SOWERS of GOOD SEED. Stressing that EVERY CHRISTIAN is to be a PERSONAL SOUL WINNER!

- Staying ALERT to the Efforts of the ENEMY and NOT COMPROMISING with them. *Note:* Nehemiah.

- DEFENDING, GUARDING, PROTECTING, and GUIDING the ARMY of GOD to VICTORY.

- Let US Lift UP a VOICE that will be HEARD!! A National VOICE on Prime Time Television that will let the PEOPLE know that we are NOT a Band of RED-NECKED, BIGOTED, IGNORANT, People who bring more MISERY to people than BLESSING. Then, LET'S take that VOICE to the ENTIRE WORLD with the MESSAGE OF SALVATION by GRACE through FAITH that moves MEN to OBEDIENCE to the WILL OF GOD.

- Let us STOP BICKERING over matters of OPINION and BUILD a SPIRIT of UNITY like our LORD PRAYED for in JOHN 17.

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Yes, it is time for us to WAKE UP! Will you be a part of this great awakening by beginning right now to do all that you can to teach as many as you can

while there is yet time to do it? May God bless us as we strive to reach the world for Christ.

Ted Knight



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by the word of Christ.

A much clearer translation of these verses would be: 16 But they did not all hearken to the gospel. For Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed our report? 17 So the faith comes out of the report, and the report *comes* through the word of Christ.

Many well-intentioned gospel preachers teach that this verse proves that we must hear (verb) in order to have faith. (While this is true, it is taught in other passages, not in Rom. 10:16-17).

The brevity of this article precludes us considering other passages where the

Greek noun ἀκοή is found.

Concluding Remarks

It is unscholarly not to recognize that the English word “hearing” can be either a verb or a noun and not to research to see whether the word (in some particular verse) is a verb or a noun. One does not have to know the Greek language to see this point.

Marion Fox





“MORE ABOUT JESUS WOULD I KNOW” (1)

Frank R. Williams

To the right thinking person, there is no sweeter word in the English language than that of “Jesus!” The old favorite song says it so well: “More about Jesus would I know, More of His grace to others show; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love Who died for me.” The song was written by Eliza Edmunds Hewitt (1851 – 1920) and published in 1887. One thing for sure, we will never know too much about Jesus of Nazareth!

In looking for information on the “historical Jesus,” one will learn it is almost universally agreed that Jesus existed: “He certainly existed, as virtually every competent scholar of antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees” (See endnote 1) Two events are acknowledged: 1) that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and 2) that Jesus was crucified by the order of the Pontius Pilate. (See endnotes 2, 3 and 4). With this information agreed upon by “modern scholarship,” we can give the following:

- 1) Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist; and
- 2) Jesus was crucified by the order of Pontius Pilate;
- 3) Therefore, Jesus existed!

We can also conclude that Jesus was born and lived a number of years be-

fore he was baptized by John; and that he lived a certain amount of time between being baptized and his being crucified. This also brings a question to mind. If “modern scholarship” can agree upon these two events in the life of Jesus, why is it so hard to believe that he was born in Bethlehem and that he was raised in Nazareth? Keep in mind that most of Jesus’ life (other than his time in Egypt) was lived in an area that totaled around 12,000 square miles (subject to mistake), from Syria in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west, and from Mount Hermon in the north to the Arabian Desert in the south. To help in our understanding, the state of Maryland has 12,407 square miles and Oklahoma has 69,903 square miles. Oklahoma is 5.8 times as large as Israel when God gave it to Israel under the leadership of Joshua. Travel was not easy, for instance, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho involved a descent of 3,500 feet in just fourteen miles! Or, going from Jericho to Jerusalem one would ascend 3,500 feet in the same fourteen miles! This makes the words: “And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho” (Luke 19:1) take on a totally new meaning. For we know that Jesus had traveled this rugged terrain descending those 3,500 feet. It was, of course, here that we learn of the man of “little of stature,” Zacchaeus, who

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“climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him” (Luke 19:4). But, more important than this, it was at the house of this little man that Jesus uttered words that identified his mission on earth: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Of, course, there was the return trip! Studying this way, the physical Judean land comes alive as we realize Jesus really walked there!

Then we must not forget the mountains in the land. Mount Hermon, where was Caesarea Philippi the city where Jesus said: “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:13-18), and is located on the southwestern slope about 25 miles north-east of the Sea of Galilee. The city itself is one of the most pleasant sites in Israel, as it is on a terrace 1,150 feet high and overlooks a fertile valley. It was the northernmost extent of Jesus’ travel. Mount Hermon’s highest point being about 9,200 feet above sea level; and more than likely the scene of the transfiguration. It was in the transfiguration that God said: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). Then, near the southern end of Judea is the lowest area of elevation, the Dead Sea which is 1,300 (1,407) feet below sea level and is the earth’s lowest elevation on land. There are two Hebrew words: one meaning “Sea of Salt” and the other meaning “The Sea of Death.” It is 48 miles long! There is no record that Jesus ever visited the Dead Sea! Therefore,

let us go near the city of Jerusalem to Mount Olivet, where Jesus wept over the City of Jerusalem: “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it” (Luke 19:41). Why did Jesus weep? Let him answer our question: “Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19:42 – 44). But, Mount Olivet is more remembered for another event, an event so dear to our hearts. Following the Passover meal, which Jesus used to introduce what Paul calls the “Lord’s Supper,” (1 Cor. 11:20), Jesus took the disciples out into the Mount and he prayed. He prayed not once, but three times saying: “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). Luke informs us, “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). So, on Mount Olivet we are still singing: “More about Jesus would I know, More of His grace to others show; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love Who died for

me!”

The name Jesus in the Greek is “Iēsous” and means: “Jehovah is salvation.” Our English name Joshua in the Greek is also “Iēsous” and this has produced some confusion in Hebrews, which reads: “For if Jesus (Iēsous) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day” (Heb. 4:8). Here the writer is speaking of Joshua and the fact that he never gave the eternal “rest” of which the writer is now addressing. No, this “rest” only Jesus can give! Joshua delivered Israel out of the “wilderness” into the “promised land,” but there remaineth a greater “rest” which Jesus will give, which is heaven itself! This same mistake is made in the reverse in Acts 7:45, which reads: “Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus (Iēsous) into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David.” Here the text should read Joshua and not Jesus; as it was Joshua that brought the Hebrews fathers “into the possessions of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers.” However, it must be noted that the meaning of the Greek is true in both cases; God delivered, or God is salvation! With Joshua and physical Israel, it was physical deliverance and with Jesus and spiritual Israel it is spiritual salvation! Thus, the beautiful words of Jesus: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30). These words were spoken in the “cities” (Matt. 11:1, 20). Please my brethren, do not look upon these words in a physical light, but in a spiritual light! Jesus came to remove the “burden” of sin, he came to set us free when we are “heavy laden” with sin, but he said, “I will give you rest;” I will forgive you of your sins! With Jesus we shall find rest unto our sin laden souls! Oh, please:

“More about Jesus would I know!”

“More about Jesus let me learn,
More of His holy will discern;
Spirit of God my teacher be,
Showing the things of Christ to me.”

Endnotes:

- 1) In a 2011 review of the state of modern scholarship, Bart Ehrman (a secular agnostic) wrote: “He certainly existed, as virtually every competent scholar of antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees” B. Ehrman, 2011 *Forged: writing in the name of God* ISBN 978-0-06-207863-6. page 285
- 2) *Jesus Remembered* by James D. G. Dunn 2003 ISBN 0-8028-3931-2 page 339 states of baptism and crucifixion that these “two facts in the life of Jesus command almost universal assent”.
- 3) *Prophet and Teacher: An Introduction to the Historical Jesus* by William R. Herzog (4 Jul 2005) ISBN 0664225284 pages 1-6
- 4) *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* by

Concerning His will, the writer of the book of Hebrews says Jesus would be the mediator of a “new” covenant (Hebrews 8:8, 13). The Greek’s used the word “kainos,” which in English versions is “new,” signifying newness in relation to quality, rather than newness in relation to time. In this passage the writer of Hebrews also uses the word “neos” signifying “new” in terms of time to describe the covenant initiated by Jesus. This covenant of Christ, therefore, was “new” pertaining to its nature, i.e., superior in quality, compared to the Mosaic period, which was inaugurated circa fifteen centuries earlier.

This same inspired writer quotes from Jeremiah’s prophecy of the coming of a “new” covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) implying an eventual cessation of the “old.” Thus, something that is “old” by very nature is certain to cease to exist at some point (Hebrews 8:13), thus establishing the fact that the last will and testament of Jesus will never co-exist with another. The inimitable apostle Paul, using an analogy, forcefully argued that attempting to live under two covenants simultaneously is akin to being married to two women at the same time – which is called “adultery.” Thus, those who are joined (“married” KJV) to Christ are dead to (i.e., separated from) the Law of Moses (Romans 7:2-4).

With reference to Jesus’ mission, the Hebrews writer states that He takes away “the first that He may establish the

second” (10:9). This explicit expression of purpose demonstrates that the second testament would only become operative after the first testament was cancelled. The two testaments could not be mutually binding.

When are the terms of a will articulated to the beneficiaries? The terms are communicated after the testator’s death. This explains the time and the content of the rest of the New Testament following the gospels. It makes perfect sense that the complete terms of Christ’s will would only be disclosed after His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus left the Holy Spirit behind to continue to unveil the terms of His will until the reading of such will was completed (John 16:12-13). These terms are now documented in the pages of the New Testament.

The writer of Hebrews also effectively argues that a testament is not in force until the testator is dead. “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. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives” (Hebrews 9:15-17).

A clear understanding of this principle would alleviate a very relevant issue in the religious world. Many pro-

test the belief that immersion in water is a requirement to receive forgiveness of sins – despite clear passages (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 3:21). In attempting to negate the clear teachings of these texts, the appeal is made to the “thief on the cross,” who allegedly received forgiveness of sins without immersion.

Before Jesus died He forgave the penitent thief being crucified alongside (Luke 23:39-43). So his forgiveness, therefore, was not based upon the conditions of the testament that became effective at Jesus’ death ! Additionally, it cannot be proven that the thief had not been immersed for the forgiveness of sins at some time in the past – either by John the baptizer, or by one of the Lord’s disciples (Mark 1:4; John 4:1-2).

Ultimately, during His ministry on earth, Christ possessed the authority to do as He willed, to grant pardon directly, as He did on behalf of others (cf., the palsied man of Mark 2:1ff). After his death, however, His establishment of salvation’s conditions was to be expressed in his “last will and testament.” And immersion in that document is clearly a requirement and the point in time that sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

What separates Christ’s will from all others ? Most wills deliver physical blessings to those who are qualified and who will meet the terms and con-

ditions contained therein. The inheritance, therefore, is only temporary, and eventually whatever one receives will either decay or be given to someone else. However, Christ’s last will and testament delivers to each person an incorruptible inheritance, reserved in heaven, which will never fade away (1 Peter 1:4). There is not another will; past, present, or future, that can bless men eternally.

However, that will is not without its conditions. From the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul writes in reference to the inheritance received by an heir, “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father” (Galatians 4:1-2).

Regarding this inheritance, a father may will it to his son. Stipulating a condition or conditions was the prerogative of and left to the discretion of the testator. These conditions could be related to age, finishing school, displaying maturity, or good character etc. Thus the conditional nature of Christ’s last will and testament cannot be dismissed.

In regard to salvation, one may be justified by obedience to the conditions in Jesus’ last will and testament. Notice these passage containing the word “except” associated with various conditions of salvation. “Except” a person repents, he will perish (Luke 13:3,

5). "Except" one believes in Christ, he will die in his sins (John 8:24). "Except" one is born of water and the Spirit, he will never enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). In His letter to the Romans, it was Paul himself who clearly argued that Christians have been "made free from sin" by virtue of "obedience" to the divine "pattern of teaching" (Romans 6:17-18; John 3:36, ASV; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:17). He calls this the "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5; 16:26). In order to access the blessings of the testament of Christ, there are obvious conditions to be met.

Jesus' "last will and testament" may not be altered once ratified. In his letter to the Galatians, in an immediate context concerning God's promise to Abraham and the backdrop of human contract law, Paul makes this statement relative to the nature of a covenant or testament. "Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it." (Galatians 3:15). That promise to the patriarch was inviolate. But it is important to realize that even though the law of Moses was later injected into God's unfolding plan of redemption, it in no way annulled God's original promise to the father of the Hebrews.

The implication of Paul's statement is

this: once Jesus died, and His testament had been ratified, no one is authorized to alter it in any manner. However, just as the Pharisees of the first century, altered the Law of Moses with their unjustified "traditions" (Matthew 15:1-9), men of the modern world have followed suit.

Conclusion: The New Testament is much more than a historical document. It is much more than a guidebook for Christian living. It is much more than an ethical foundation for a peaceful society. The New Testament is the "last will and testament" of the one and only Son of God. It makes sense, then, that mankind would make sure to be present when the terms and blessings of His will are being publicly extolled. Weekly public readings and explanations of the terms of this "Last Will and Testament" of Jesus Christ are happening regularly at a church of Christ near you. You would be blessed to attend.

"For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Hebrews 9:16-17). "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:1).

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1) In a 2011 review of the state of modern scholarship, Bart Ehrman (a secular agnostic) wrote: “He certainly existed, as virtually every competent scholar of

antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees” B. Ehrman, 2011 Forged : writing in the name of God ISBN 978-0-06-207863-6. page 285

	Class One	Class Two
1 st Period 6:30-7:15 PM	1, 2, and 3 rd John	The Gist of the Bible
	Jerry Gore	Marion R. Fox
2 nd Period 7:45-8:30 PM	Galatians	Romans in Greek
	Chris Hill	Marion R. Fox
3 rd Period 8:30-9:15 PM	none	II Corinthians
		Marion R. Fox

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-- The Editor