

“Ready to Make a Defense”
(1 Peter 3:15)

Answering Critics of the Church of Christ

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Introduction

The title of our series, *Ready to Make a Defense*, is taken from 1 Peter 3:15, “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

No one has asked me to present a defense on this occasion, and no direct charges have been made against this church to my knowledge. However, as general charges are frequently made against the churches of Christ, it is necessary to give an answer.

I do not presume to speak for all churches of Christ. I recognize that a sign in front of a place of worship does not endorse nor indict those who meet there in their relationship to the Lord as each local church stands on its own. Each church is autonomous, and its business is its own. Although 1 Corinthians 1:10 gives instructions to members of the local church “that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment,” this often is not the case from local church to local church. I am not attempting to advocate “church of Christ” doctrine, but rather the doctrine of Christ found in the Bible for His church.

However, most of those with whom I share my faith have chosen to describe their congregations as “churches of Christ,” which is one of many descriptions given for the church in the Bible. Therefore, when charges are made against the “church of Christ,” they are typically directly toward my brethren.

Therefore, I seek to present a defense for why most members of the churches of Christ believe as they do in regards to those charges that are made against them. While many accusations are made against the churches of Christ and its members, the brevity of this study only permits a response to some of these. The charges that I have chosen to answer are as follows:

1. The churches of Christ are a denomination founded by Alexander Campbell.
2. Members of the churches of Christ believe that they are the only souls going to heaven.
3. The churches of Christ teach legalism.
4. Members of the churches of Christ do not believe in the modern ministry of the Holy Spirit.
5. Members of the churches of Christ are opposed to music in worship.

In presenting this defense, I take to heart the commandment to “sanctify Christ as Lord.” Christ is to be set apart in our hearts as Lord, i.e., He alone is the authority over each individual and congregation of His people. Therefore, only the word of Christ as revealed in Scripture will be considered as justification for that which is believed and practiced. To Him be the glory!

If in this study it is revealed that anyone (myself, a member of this church, or otherwise) is opposed to the true word of God, then this is also an opportunity to make corrections. I am unaware of any members of this church who have advocated false practices regarding the charges that I seek to answer. However, if an error comes to light, then we thank God for the opportunity to make it right.

Stacey Durham

CHARGE #1: THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE A DENOMINATION FOUNDED BY ALEXANDER CAMPBELL.

I. AN EXPLANATION OF THE CHARGE

- A. This charge is made because the churches of Christ believe and advocate the same doctrine that was advocated by Alexander Campbell during the so-called “Restoration Movement” of the early 1800’s.
1. The Restoration Movement came about when many believers in the United States realized that the churches of their time had departed from the divine pattern of belief and practice for the church as revealed in the Bible. Therefore, they sought to restore the original design for the church.
 2. Some other prominent individuals associated with this movement were:
 - a. Thomas Campbell, Alexander’s father and an Irish Presbyterian
 - b. Barton W. Stone, a Maryland Presbyterian
 - c. James O’Kelley, a Virginia Methodist
 - d. Elias Smith, a New Hampshire Baptist
 - e. Dr. Abner Jones, a Massachusetts Baptist
 3. The doctrine advocated by these men in the Restoration Movement is summarized in these quotations:
 - a. “...it belongs to every individual and to every congregation of individuals to discard from their faith and their practice everything that is not found written in the New Testament of the Lord and Savior, and to believe and practice whatever is there enjoined.” (Alexander Campbell, *The Christian Baptist*)
 - b. “...that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell.” (Barton W. Stone and others, *The Last Will and Testament of The Springfield Presbytery*)
 - c. “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” (Thomas Campbell, quoted at the home of Abraham Altars, near Washington, Pennsylvania)
 4. Thus, the doctrine that associates the churches of Christ with Alexander Campbell and others is that the Bible is to be used exclusively as a religious guide without addition or subtraction.
- B. The question that must be answered to determine if Alexander Campbell started a denomination known as the “church of Christ” is this: Did this doctrine of using the Bible exclusively as a guide in religion originate with Alexander Campbell and these other men?
1. If the answer is “yes”, then these men would be the founders of the church that follows that same doctrine. Any church that follows a doctrine formed by a man is founded by that man.
 2. However, if these men are not the originators of this doctrine, then those who follow this doctrine can no more be called “Campbellites” than those who followed the teachings of Paul could be called “Paulonians.” Notice that Paul wrote, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).
 3. If this doctrine did not originate with Campbell or these other men, who then is the author of this doctrine? In this lesson, it will be demonstrated that God is the source.
 4. This is no “straw man” argument. All of the points of contention that critics of the churches of Christ have with the church (such as baptism, instrumental music, the Lord’s Supper, grace, salvation, etc.) relate back to this core doctrine. In each point, it is a matter of authority.

II. IS IT FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?

- A. Essentially, when considering any belief or practice, one should ask: What is its source? Is it from heaven or from men?
1. This is the question that Jesus asked concerning John's baptism when the chief priests and elders confronted Him, asking by what authority He acted (Matt. 21:25).
 2. The question by Jesus reveals two possible sources for authority in anything: God or man.
- B. As we approach this matter, let us do so with the conviction that the Bible is the infallible, inspired word of God. See 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
1. Space does not permit a validation of this conviction in this lesson, but it can be demonstrated convincingly with internal and external evidence.
 2. This conviction leads us to understand that if a doctrine can be found approved in the Bible, then it has its origin in God. Even if the doctrine is brought to the surface after having been neglected for many years, it still has its origin in God.
- C. With that, let it be now demonstrated that the concept of “speak where the Bible speaks, be silent where the Bible is silent” is found in the Bible and therefore has God as its source. These passages are presented without

commentary, but please notice that they commend compliance with God's word only and rejection of the doctrines of men.

1. "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:8-9; Jesus quoted from Isaiah 29:13)
 2. "Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God..." (1 Pet. 4:11)
 3. "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8-9)
 4. "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9)
 5. "Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" (John 8:31-32)
 6. "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)
 7. "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." (John 17:20-21)
 8. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." (John 15:10)
 9. "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 3-4)
 10. "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book." (Rev. 22:18-19)
 11. "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." (Deut. 4:2)
- D. This body of Scriptural evidence is sufficient to prove that the idea of using the Bible exclusively as a religious guide without adding to it or taking away from it originated in the Bible itself.
1. In other words, this doctrine came from God.
 2. Campbell, Stone and others arrived at the same conclusion because they studied from the same revelation of God.
- E. The difference between Alexander Campbell and others like John Calvin (founder of the Presbyterian church), John Wesley (founder of the Methodist church), John Smyth (founder of the Baptist church), and Joseph Smith (founder of the Mormon church) is that Alexander taught a Bible doctrine while these others formed doctrines and creeds not found in the Bible.
- F. With a proper understanding that the Bible alone is to be used to determine what God would have us believe, say, and do, anyone can understand:
1. The divine Head of the church.
 2. The divine organization the church.
 3. The divine terms of entrance into the church.
 4. The divine design for the work of the church.
 5. The divine design for the worship of the church.
 6. The divine designations for the church.

III. WERE THESE THINGS REALLY LOST?

- A. With all that being said, are we to believe that these things were lost or neglected from the first apostasy of the New Testament church until the early 1800's?
1. Certainly not, but some have this incorrect impression.
 2. This impression has caused some to claim that members of the church of Christ are Campbellites because it is as if we teach that the church was recreated again at the time of the Restoration Movement led by Campbell.

- B. The fact is that the Lord's church has been in existence since it was first established in the first century. There was never a time when it disappeared off the face of the earth.
1. Unfortunately, before the New Testament was even complete, churches were already falling into apostasy. In fact, many of the epistles are written initially to stave off apostasy. A sort of "restoration movement" was already beginning in the New Testament days (Rev. 2:1-5, for example, the church at Ephesus).
 2. That tendency to apostasy did not end with the close of the New Testament writing. Instead, it magnified and multiplied, but not to the extent that there were no faithful Christians left.
 3. How do we know?
 - a. The word of God has continued through the world to produce Christians wherever it has fallen into good and honest hearts. See Matthew 13:23.
 - b. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. For, 'All flesh is like grass, And its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the LORD abides forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you." (1 Pet. 1:22-25)
- C. Even beyond this, we know that the church has continued in existence because of religious historians.
1. In fact, it is largely in the writings of Catholic historians that evidence of these faithful Christians can be found.
 2. These records show charges and punishments for people who were following the Bible in opposition to the Catholic church hundreds of years before Campbell. In general, these charges were:
 - a. Rejection of infant baptism - Their defense was that infants are without sin and that a person through his own choice should decide whether he wishes to be baptized and wash away his sins.
 - b. Rejection of the Eucharist as a sacrifice - Their defense was that the Lord's Supper was not a sacrifice but a memorial to be taken on the first day of the week.
 - c. Rejection of the Old Testament as justification for practices in worship - Their defense was that they held all the Scriptures sacred, but the word of God needed to be rightly divided. For example, the formal priesthood of the Old Testament did not apply in the Christian era.
 - d. Rejection of cathedrals and altars - Their defense was that any place was a suitable place of worship.
 - e. Rejection of idols and images - Their defense was that this practice was contrary to the word of God.
 - f. Rejection of sprinkling or pouring as a mode of baptism - Their defense was that immersion was commanded in the word of God.
 - g. Rejection of a separate priesthood and clergy - Their defense was that all were equal in Christ, proclaiming the universal priesthood of believers.
 - h. Rejection of prayers for the dead, holy days and good works (without faith, Ephesians 2:8-10) - Their defense was that these were contrary to the word of God.
 - i. Rejection of celibacy - Their defense was that this was contrary to the word of God.
 - j. Rejection of the hierarchy of bishops - Their defense was that congregations were autonomous, being overseen by a plurality of elders (bishops).

I refer you to a web site called www.traces-of-the-kingdom.org for a detailed and interesting history of the church in Europe from the first century until 1800

IV. WHAT IS CAMPBELL'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH?

- A. To that question, consider this quote from "Raccoon" John Smith: "Let us then, brethren, be no longer Campbellites, or Stoneites, or New Lights, or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us all come to the Bible and the Bible alone, as the only Book in the world that can give us all the light we need." (Lexington, KY, 1832)
- B. Alexander Campbell was just a preacher, though he was prominent.
 1. He did a lot of good work in spreading the truth and defeating error.
 2. However, Campbell was susceptible to error, too.
 - a. In 1823, he wrote that churches "dare not transfer to a missionary society, or Bible society or education society, a cent or a prayer, lest in so doing they should rob the church of its glory,

and exalt the inventions of men above the wisdom of God. In their church capacity alone they moved...”

- b. However, in 1849, Campbell became president of “The American Christian Missionary Society.”
- c. Such missionary societies or any other outside organization designed to supersede the work of the church violates the pattern of the church revealed in the Bible.

C. Such is the way of men, but we must follow the way of Christ revealed in the Holy Bible.

V. CONCLUSION

A. Members of the churches of Christ must be careful in their thinking.

- 1. We sometimes come dangerously close to denominationalism.
 - a. Some want to cling to persons like Campbell and Stone, or even more recent names.
 - b. I have heard some who insist that the only Scriptural designation for the church is the church of Christ. These persons want to wear “church of Christ” as a title rather than a description.
 - i. Hence, there are sayings such as, “He is a church of Christ preacher,” or, “I am church of Christ.”
 - ii. The Bible designates the church as simply “the church,” “the church of God,” “the churches of Christ,” “the kingdom,” “the household of God,” “the body of Christ,” “the church of the Firstborn,” etc.
- 2. The truth is that we are only responsible for what we do right now.
 - a. We are not responsible for those who came before us nor for those who may come after us.
 - b. Regardless of what history may have occurred between the close of the New Testament and today, ***we can be what God would have us to be as a church now.***

B. This is what matters now, that we are individually Christians as described in the New Testament and collectively the church as described in the New Testament.

CHARGE #2: MEMBERS OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE THE ONLY SOULS GOING TO HEAVEN.

I. AN EXPLANATION OF THE CHARGE

A. This charge stems from two core beliefs held by members of the churches of Christ. The validity of these beliefs will be demonstrated in this lesson.

- 1. One belief is that the New Testament church is the body of the saved. In other words, everyone who receives salvation is added to the church by the Lord, and there is no salvation outside of the church.
- 2. The other belief is that there is only one church recognized by Christ as His church. This one universal church of Christ is made up of individual Christians (not local churches or denominations) who believe and practice the same things according to the word of God, the Bible.

B. These beliefs are contrary to some common opinions regarding salvation and the church.

- 1. Some believe that one is not required to be a member of any church to be saved.
- 2. Many believe in the concept of denominationalism, which teaches that there are many different denominations that collectively make up the one universal church of Christ. According to this teaching, each denomination is made up of many localized churches that believe and practice the same things, and each different denomination is a branch of the universal church of Christ. Therefore, all denominations are part of the one saved body.
- 3. Others agree that the church is the body of the saved and that there is one church recognized by Christ, but they do not believe that the church of Christ is that church. Examples of these would be Mormons, Catholics, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

C. Due to the differences in these beliefs, some have taken offense at the beliefs of members of the church of Christ.

- 1. Some charge that members of the church of Christ are elitists who consider themselves better than others and more deserving of salvation.
- 2. Some charge that members of the church of Christ believe that they have earned their salvation and are entitled by having membership in a local church of Christ.
- 3. Some charge that members of the church of Christ are passing a judgment of condemnation on those who are outside of the church by teaching their beliefs pertaining to the church and salvation.

D. Before answering these charges, let us qualify all that is to be stated in this defense.

1. No man has the authority or power to make and execute judgments of anyone's eternal destination. Men can neither save nor condemn. Such judgment belongs solely to our Lord (2 Cor. 5:10).
2. However, the Lord has not left us without an explanation of whom He will save and whom He will condemn. The word of God reveals the standards by which the Lord will make His judgment (John 12:48). This is similar to the laws of men in that men may not know how a judge or jury in a court of law will rule on a given case, but they can know the standards upon which the ruling will be made.
3. Using the standard of God's word and pointing out what it says to others is not passing judgment. In fact, a "good servant of Christ Jesus" is bound to do so (1 Tim. 4:6). Telling someone that he is in conflict with the word of God is no more passing judgment than telling him that it is illegal to exceed the speed limit.
4. In all that we say and do, love must be our motivation just as it is for God (1 Cor. 13). We must speak the truth even when people are offended, and we must speak it in love (Eph. 4:15).

II. DEFENSE OF THESE BELIEFS

- A. Let us first examine these two beliefs in light of the Bible to determine if they are well-founded.
- B. Is the New Testament church the body of the saved?
 1. Understand first what the church was in the New Testament.
 - a. The Greek word *ekklesia* is translated as "church" and means "a called out assembly." In English, we might also call it a congregation or simply a group of people.
 - b. *Ekklesia* was not a new word used exclusively by followers of Christ. It was a common word that could designate any group of people that assembled for any purpose.
 - c. In the New Testament, *ekklesia* almost always refers to an assembly of disciples of Christ, and the contexts demonstrate this.
 2. When the gospel was first preached on the Day of Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection, every person who was being saved was added by the Lord to a congregation of people, which was His congregation or church.
 - a. "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41)
 - b. Further, we see that "the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47)
 - i. The King James Version presents this phrase as "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."
 - ii. *Ekklesia* does not appear in this verse in many of the ancient manuscripts of the book of Acts. However, the thought is correct because the collection of all persons called by the message of the gospel was a called out assembly, a church.
 - iii. Further, this same collection of persons is identified as the church beginning in Acts 5:11, and it is regularly called the church thereafter.
 - c. The church is not a description for only the collection of saved persons who were located at Jerusalem, but it also refers to those who were saved in every place as the gospel was spread.
 - i. Congregations of disciples who assembled together in their particular locations were called churches in a local sense. See Acts 8:1; 11:22,26; 14:23; 15:41; 16:5; 20:17.
 - ii. Collectively, all of the saved make up the universal church. See Matthew 16:18; Acts 9:31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10; 5:22-32; 1 Timothy 3:15.
 - d. Therefore, if anyone is saved, he is added to the church by the Lord.
 3. Also, the Bible reveals that Christ is the Savior of the church.
 - a. "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." (Eph. 5:23)
 - b. The "body" is identified as the church in Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:24. Therefore, Christ is the Savior of the church.
 - c. Thus, if one desires to have Christ as his Savior, then he will see the necessity of being part of the church, the body of the saved.
 4. Further Scriptural proof could be exposed revealing that Christ purchased the church (Acts 20:28), that the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-32), that the church is the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:22-28), etc., but these points are sufficient to demonstrate that the New Testament church is indeed the body of the saved.
- C. Is there only one church recognized by Christ as His church?

1. Jesus told Peter, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it” (Matt. 16:18). Clearly, Jesus had one church in mind when He foretold that He would build His church.
 - a. Jesus began building that church on the Day of Pentecost when He began adding together saved souls into one congregation.
 - b. Notice that the Lord did not separate these saved souls into diverse denominations, but rather He built one church of which all were members.
2. The same Scriptures presented above to show that Christ purchased the church with His blood, that the church is His body and His bride, and that the church is His kingdom, also demonstrate the singularity of His church.
 - a. There is only one church that He purchased with His blood, and that is the one that He recognizes.
 - b. Just as a person has one head and one body, so also Christ is one Head who has one body, the church.
 - c. Just as a man has one wife that he recognizes as his own, so also Christ has one bride, the church.
 - d. Just a king rules over one kingdom, so also Christ is a King over one kingdom, the church.
3. If there is any doubt, Ephesians 4:4 states explicitly that “There is one body...”
 - a. That one body is the one church of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23).
 - b. Notice that if one accepts that there is more than one body (church), then he will also have to accept that there can be more than one God, one Lord, and one Spirit based on Ephesians 4:4-6.
4. Thus, it is well established that there is only one church recognized by Christ as His church.

D. Therefore, because the Bible teaches that the church is the body of the saved and that there is only one church, it stands to reason that those who desire to be saved would strive to be a part of that one church.

III. ARE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE ONLY SOULS WHO WILL ENTER HEAVEN?

- A. Understand first that those who lived before the revelation of the gospel predated the church.
 1. Obviously, they could not be part of the church that did not yet exist.
 2. However, those who were faithful to God under their particular dispensations and laws have the benefit of forgiveness provided by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In other words, they are saved. Christ’s sacrifice was retroactive and proactive.
 3. The limitations of this study do not permit a detailed explanation, but an examination of Hebrews 9:11-28 is recommended.
- B. In these final days, as has already been proved, the Bible states that Christ is the Savior of the church. Therefore one must be a member of the church to be saved.
 1. This prompts the question: Is the church of Christ the church for which Christ is the Savior?
 2. The answer is yes, provided that one understands that “church of Christ” is a description of the church that belongs to Christ and not the title of a denomination.
 - a. “Church of Christ” simply denotes ownership. It is the church that belongs to Him.
 - i. He said, “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18). Obviously, Christ saves the church that is His.
 - ii. He adds souls to His church. (Acts 2:41,47) Man does not have a vote for who is in and who is out of the universal church. Salvation and the addition of saved souls to the church by the Lord are simultaneous.
 - b. This same church is described by many other terms in the Bible. One could also rightly say that Christ saves:
 - i. The church of God (1 Cor. 1:2).
 - ii. The church of the First-born (Heb. 12:23).
 - iii. The church of the Living God (1 Tim. 3:15).
 - iv. The bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-32).
 - v. The body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).
 - vi. Any other Scriptural description of the same church.
 3. Can anyone deny that Christ will save the church that belongs to Him?
- C. However, it is foolhardy to focus only on the name of the church for an indication of whether or not the Lord will be the Savior of it.

1. Membership in a church that calls itself “church of Christ,” “church of God,” “church of the First-born,” or any other Scriptural name is not an automatic qualification to enter heaven just because the name is Scriptural.
 2. Rather, the focus must be upon whether or not the individual and the church are conforming to the will of God revealed through the word of God (which includes whether or not they designate themselves according to God or according to men).
- D. Therefore, let us focus upon what the Bible says about those who will enter heaven and those who will not enter heaven.
1. Clearly, the Bible teaches that the blatantly sinful and rebellious will not enter heaven. See 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8.
 2. However, the Lord also teaches us that there are others who will not enter heaven who do not fall into this category of “hardened” sinners.
 - a. For example, Jesus declared to the Pharisees, “I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).
 - i. Notice that these were religious people who were considered good people and authorities on religion by most of their countrymen.
 - ii. Yet Jesus said that they would die in their sins, which is to be eternally lost, because they did not believe in Him as the Christ. This applies to the non-religious as well as those who practice religions other than the religion of Christ.
 - b. Moreover, Jesus explained that even among those who believe in Him, some will be lost because they will be ill-prepared when He comes again.
 - i. In Matthew 24:45-25:1-13, after Jesus had taught that the time of His second coming is unknown, He taught the parables of the two servants and the ten virgins to show that believers must always be prepared for His coming or else they will be excluded from the Master’s pleasure.
 - ii. In Matthew 25:14-30, He taught the parable of the talents to show that believers who are poor stewards of their Master’s blessings will be denied the Master’s reward.
 - iii. In Matthew 25:31-46, the Lord taught that even believers who fail to practice love toward their brethren will “go away into eternal punishment.”
 3. The defining principle for determining which religious persons will enter the kingdom of heaven and which will not is found in Matthew 7:21-23.
 - a. In this passage, Jesus described what will happen “on that day” (v. 22), which means the Day of Judgment.
 - b. He described a group of people who appeal to Him, saying, “Lord, Lord,” many of whom will be lost.
 - i. Among those who will say “Lord, Lord” are religious persons who will claim to have done great works in the name of Jesus, but whom Jesus will not recognize as His own because they “practice lawlessness.”
 - ii. These are those religious persons who do lip service to the Lord. See Luke 6:46. They do as they please and then ascribe it to the authority of Jesus.
 - c. Jesus said that the person who will be granted entrance into the kingdom of heaven is “he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”
 - i. This person calls Jesus “Lord” and also does what He says.
 - ii. Jesus reinforced this teaching in the following verses (Matt. 7:24-27) where he taught that the one who hears His words and acts upon them is wise indeed.
- E. Therefore, those who will be saved and go to heaven are those who do the will of the Father. Likewise, those who do the will of the Father comprise the church that belongs to Christ, for which He is the Savior.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. There was a time when men were more willing to debate the merits of their particular faith in light of the word of God.
- B. Now, our modern sensitivities and political correctness have led many to abandon the pursuit of truth and declare that almost any system of faith is equal in merit.
 1. Many are so squeamish about declaring what is right or wrong that they have accepted that almost anything is right regarding the church.
 2. This may provide false comfort now, but who will be able to stand before the Lord and give an account for his actions?

- C. The truth is simple and best. The Lord saves those who are faithful, and those saved souls comprise His church.

CHARGE #3: THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST TEACH LEGALISM.

I. AN EXPLANATION OF THE CHARGE

- A. According to *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, Legalism is "close attention to, and precise obedience to, the stated requirements of the law, without regard to their intention (i.e. attention to the letter rather than to the spirit of the law)."
- B. The terms "legalism," "legalist," and "legalistic" are not found in most English translations of the New Testament, but the concept of legalism is presented.
1. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for legalism and hypocrisy, for they complied with the laws of their religion in their teachings and deeds, but their hearts were wrong.
 - a. "Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matt. 23:28)
 - b. "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15)
 2. Legalism is combated in many of the epistles also, for there were certain Jewish Christians who errantly taught many of the early churches that it was necessary for Gentiles to comply with the Law of Moses, especially circumcision, in order for them to be saved.
 - a. "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." (Gal. 5:4)
 - b. "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." (Gal. 2:21)
- C. In addition to the dictionary definition and the scriptural concept of legalism, the perception of legalism among most religious people is that of a system of religion in which a person is justified (made right) because he adheres to all of the commandments of a law.
1. No man except Christ has ever been justified this way because no one but Christ has ever adhered to the law of God without transgression. See Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:20; 8:3; Hebrews 4:15.
 2. As it is, mankind has failed to keep the laws of God flawlessly, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
- D. However, legalism also has a solution for one who transgresses the law (sins).
1. Legalism teaches that the transgressor can be justified by performing a work specified in the law to atone for the sin.
 2. According to the errant reasoning of legalism, it is the work itself that merits justification. In other words, the work that the transgressor performs is so valuable that God is indebted to the transgressor to forgive the sin. See Romans 4:4.
 3. Therefore, legalism cancels the necessity of God's grace and mercy, for the transgressor can earn his salvation by performing works of the law.
- E. It is this concept of legalism that the churches of Christ are charged with teaching.
1. I have never known of a gospel preacher nor have I heard any sermon preached or lesson taught in the churches of Christ that advocated legalism as presented above.
 2. Yet, this is the perception of some who, I charge, lack understanding regarding the Bible doctrine of obedience as it relates to grace and faith.

II. SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

- A. No one that I know in the churches of Christ denies that the Bible teaches salvation by grace through faith.
1. This doctrine is taught in the churches as it is stated in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."
 2. To my knowledge, nothing that the churches teach or practice contradicts nor conflicts with this Bible doctrine.
- B. The error that is made by those who charge the church with teaching legalism is the belief that having conditions whereby one receives salvation is incompatible with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. A closer examination of grace and faith will reveal that both require obedience to the conditions.
- C. Consider the Bible doctrine of salvation by grace.

1. “Grace” is translated from *charis*, and its meaning depends on the context where it is used. When grace pertains to a gift that God offers, it means “the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds.” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*)
 - a. In Ephesians 2:8-9 (quoted above), emphasis is given to the fact that the salvation given by grace is a *gift*, i.e., it is unmerited or undeserved. Salvation is not a *wage*. See also Romans 3:24.
 - b. Thus, “grace” is simply and rightly defined in this context as “unmerited favor”.
 2. In His grace, God offered salvation as a gift through the death of Christ to undeserving sinners.
 - a. “For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” (Rom. 5:7-9)
 - b. This passage indicates that sinners were unworthy (undeserving) of the death of Christ, but God gave Him anyway because of His great love.
 - c. Indeed, sinful man is corrupt and incapable of redeeming himself. Therefore, God graciously provided a Redeemer for us because He loves us. See Ephesians 2:4-5.
 3. However, this free offer of salvation by the grace of God is conditional.
 - a. Even those who charge the churches of Christ with teaching legalism must recognize that the phrase “saved by grace through faith” indicates that faith is a condition for receiving salvation by grace. Simply having faith does not make God indebted to save us, and therefore faith must be a condition.
 - b. The fact that faith (or anything else) is required as a condition for receiving salvation by grace does not nullify the gift of salvation, i.e., the condition does not change the *gift* into a *wage*.
 - c. The New Testament attributes salvation from sin to many things done by the believer, but those things do not nullify the grace of God. Some of those things are:
 - i. Belief (John 8:24)
 - ii. Repentance (2 Cor. 7:10)
 - iii. Confession (Rom. 10:10)
 - iv. Baptism (1 Pet. 3:21)
 - d. All of those things that are described in the Bible as leading to forgiveness of sins and salvation are part of God’s overall plan of salvation, which is given to man by His grace. It is not legalism to teach that man must comply with God’s plan in order to be saved.
 - e. Indeed, when the grace of God appeared to us, bringing salvation to all men, it also brought the knowledge of the conditions by which man can receive that salvation. See Titus 2:11-14.
- D. Let us also consider the doctrine of salvation through faith.
1. As noted above, to be “saved by grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8) indicates that faith is a condition of salvation by grace.
 - a. No one can deny that faith itself is a condition, but there may be differing concepts of what faith is.
 - b. The Scriptural definition of faith is the correct definition, and this type of faith is the condition upon which salvation by grace is received.
 2. “Faith” is defined explicitly in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
 - a. “The assurance of things hoped for” means that faith is what makes the things for which a person hopes become certain to him.
 - b. “The conviction of things not seen” means that a person’s faith is the proof that he believes in something that he has never seen.
 - c. This chapter shows that faith is more than simple mental acknowledgement (belief). Within faith are the elements of belief, trust, hope, and action.
 3. Chapter 11 of Hebrews goes on to give a practical explanation for what faith is by showing how faith was manifested in those who have had it.
 - a. In each example, the Scripture shows that men and women acted when they had faith.
 - b. The examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and others are presented as persons who had faith and acted upon it.

- c. All taken into account, this definition combined with these examples lead to a practical understanding that *faith is a belief in the unseen that leads one to take actions that he otherwise would not.*
- d. This is the kind of faith required for the salvation of man, as Hebrews 10:39 states, “But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.” In stating that we are “of *those* who have faith...”, the writer is showing that the manifestation of our faith in action must be comparable to those persons of faith described in chapter 11.
- 4. Salvation through the condition of faith requires a living faith, not a dead faith.
 - a. James 2:14-26 teaches that faith without works is dead. If faith is dead, then it is useless, and it cannot lead to salvation.
 - b. “What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?” (Jas. 2:14)
 - c. “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” (Jas. 2:26)
 - d. Does James nullify grace by requiring works of faith? Does James teach legalism, i.e., salvation by works? Certainly not! However, works of faith are conditions for salvation.
 - e. This is why Paul described the purpose of his apostleship as being “to bring about the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5).
- E. This is the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith that is taught in the Bible, and this is what is also taught in the churches of Christ.
 - 1. This doctrine is not one of legalism, for in every conditional work of faith performed it is to be understood that the power of salvation is in the blood of Jesus and His gospel.
 - 2. Members of the churches of Christ understand that it is they who are indebted to God, not the other way around, and they do not believe that they earn their salvation by means of works of merit.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Those who accuse the churches of Christ of teaching legalism fail to understand how we gain access to the fullness of God’s grace.
 - 1. They charge those who teach the conditions of God’s plan of salvation by grace of making performance of those conditions into the source of salvation. This is a false charge.
 - 2. Meanwhile, those who make these charges omit the conditions and therefore nullify the word of God, which counsels those conditions in order to receive salvation.
- B. Christ is the source of salvation to all those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9).
 - 1. By logic, we must conclude that Christ is not the source of salvation to those who fail to obey Him, and there is no other source of salvation (Acts 4:12).
 - 2. What is there to obey if not the conditions and commandments of His Word?

CHARGE #4: MEMBERS OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE MODERN MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I. AN EXPLANATION OF THE CHARGE

- A. The churches of Christ are charged with teaching that there is no *modern* ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. By “modern”, it is meant that the churches do not accept that the Holy Spirit is at work among men today.
 - 2. Thus, it is implied that the churches accept that the Holy Spirit was active among men at one time, but He has since ceased to act and now has no ministry on earth whatsoever.
- B. This charge is made against the church because members of the church of Christ do not believe that miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are performed through Christians today as they were when the church began.
 - 1. Therefore, it is implied that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is entirely based upon miraculous spiritual gifts. By this implication, to deny the current exercise of those gifts is to deny His current ministry.
 - 2. Otherwise, one must admit that it would be possible to believe in the modern ministry of the Holy Spirit while also believing that His miraculous gifts have ceased.
- C. Thus, the answers to the following questions will reveal the truth regarding this charge against the church:
 - 1. Are miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit performed through Christians today as they were when the church began?
 - 2. Is there a modern ministry of the Holy Spirit if there are no modern-day miraculous spiritual gifts?

II. MIRACULOUS GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. The Bible records the use of spiritual gifts among the church in the first century.
 1. These miraculous gifts were unnatural abilities given to men by God through the Holy Spirit.
 2. They included such things as speaking in tongues (foreign languages), interpretation of tongues, miraculous healing, prophecy, miracles, distinguishing of spirits (testing whether good or bad), revelation of wisdom, revelation of knowledge, and miraculous faith. See 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.
- B. Examples of the use of these gifts are found in the Book of Acts. Some of these examples are listed below.
 1. The apostles spoke in tongues, which are explained as being foreign languages (Acts 2:3-11).
 2. Various wonders and signs took place through the apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12).
 3. Peter performed a miraculous act of healing on a lame man (Acts 3:1-11).
 4. The apostles spoke revelation and prophecy by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-36; 4:31).
 5. Stephen spoke by the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:10).
 6. Philip the evangelist performed miracles of healing and signs in Samaria (Acts 8:5-7, 13).
- C. Notice that these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were not performed secretly, but rather they were widely known, publicly displayed, and undeniable.
 1. For example, when the apostles spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, the whole multitude “from every nation under heaven” heard the gospel in their own languages, and they were amazed (Acts 2:5-12).
 2. Also, when the apostles performed miracles of healing, they were done “among the people” (Acts 3:9; 5:12). These acts were done openly such that no one could honestly deny that a miracle had taken place.
 3. Likewise, when Philip the evangelist preached in Samaria, the multitudes heard and saw the signs which he was performing, and they were amazed (Acts 8:6-8).
 4. Thus, we see that these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were not confined to the private meetings of the church, but they were public displays of God’s power. They were not debatable happenings that could be explained by natural means, but rather they were obvious violations of natural law that could only occur by the hand of God.
- D. If these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit continue today as they did when the church began, where are these same undeniable public displays of divine power?
 1. Some who claim to have miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit now say that they are performed only among those who believe. This was not how these gifts were performed in the records of the Bible.
 2. Some who perform their so-called miraculous healings publicly often do so in carefully staged settings which do not resemble the spontaneous public settings in the Book of Acts. Their results are not the instantaneous and undeniable results of miraculous healing, but rather they are easily doubted, denied, or completely disproved as fraudulent.
 3. Those who claim to speak in tongues today do not speak in languages so that they may be understood by foreigners as the apostles did in Acts 2. Rather, they speak a series of nonsensical syllables that have no meaning to anybody. This so-called speaking in tongues is insignificant to outsiders, and yet the Bible says that speaking in tongues was a sign for unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22).
 4. Others make claims of various obscure miracles, but no one can honestly demonstrate now the kinds of miraculous powers that were commonly performed among Christians in the early church.
- E. Therefore, it cannot be denied that there has clearly been a change in the way the Holy Spirit works through Christians from biblical times until now. This change was foretold by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12.
 1. The whole context of 1 Corinthians 12-14 is the proper use of spiritual gifts.
 2. 1 Corinthians 13 is an exposition on the necessity and superiority of love, which, the text states, will last forever.
 3. In contrast to love, Paul wrote, “if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away” (v. 8). Clearly, Paul saw that there would be an end to spiritual gifts.
 4. That end, Paul wrote, would be “when the perfect comes” (v. 10).
 5. Some have assumed that the “perfect” refers to Christ so that the meaning of this passage would be that spiritual gifts will continue until Christ comes again. However, the context does not support this.
 6. The “perfect” is in contrast to the “partial” (v. 10). The context shows that “perfect”, meaning “complete”, and “partial” modify the same things, which are knowledge and prophecy in verse 9.

7. Thus we can fully express the meaning of verses 9 and 10 as follows: “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect knowledge and prophecy come, the partial knowledge and prophecy will be done away.”
 8. The partial knowledge and prophecy of spiritual gifts have been done away now because the perfect knowledge and prophecy have come to us in the Bible. Spiritual gifts are no longer necessary because the Bible gives us more than they ever could. See 1 Corinthians 14:21.
- F. The very purpose of the miraculous spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit was to reveal God’s word and to give credence to those who spoke the word of God by the Holy Spirit.
1. In each of the examples from the Book of Acts, we find that the miraculous spiritual gifts enabled men to gain the attention of people, to speak the word of God, and to prove to those people that what they heard was indeed from God.
 2. Regarding the word of salvation, Hebrews 2:3-4 says, “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”
 3. Now that the word of God has been spoken, confirmed, and witnessed by God, the gifts of the Holy Spirit have fulfilled their purpose and are no longer necessary.

III. THE MODERN MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. It has been demonstrated above that there are no modern-day miraculous spiritual gifts. However, this does not indicate that there is no modern ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- B. The Holy Spirit was given a ministry (service, work) on earth.
1. Jesus promised the apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to help them and be present with them.
 - a. “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, who the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you will know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17)
 - b. “Helper” is translated from *parakletos*, which means “called to one’s side” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*). This word was used commonly in the first century to denote a legal assistant or advocate.
 - c. Notice that Christ said that the Holy Spirit would be “another Helper,” indicating that Christ Himself was a Helper to them. See 1 John 2:1. Therefore, there is some similarity between the Holy Spirit and Christ as they minister to help man.
 2. Jesus also explained exactly what the Holy Spirit would do to help the apostles. This explanation is given in John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:8-15.
 - a. The Holy Spirit would teach them all things.
 - b. The Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all things that Jesus said.
 - c. The Holy Spirit would testify about Jesus.
 - d. The Holy Spirit would convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.
 - e. The Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth.
 - f. The Holy Spirit would disclose to them what was to come.
 - g. The Holy Spirit would glorify Christ.
 - h. The Holy Spirit would disclose to them the things of Christ.
 3. At the beginning of the church, the Holy Spirit accomplished these things with the assistance of miraculous spiritual gifts.
 - a. Before Jesus ascended, He told His apostles, “You shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5), and, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8).
 - b. The Holy Spirit first did this on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus ascended to the Father. The fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to the apostles is recorded in Acts 2:1-4.
 - c. From that day forward, the apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit unlike anyone else to speak the word of God and to perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:19; 4:30; 5:12).
 - d. Individual miraculous spiritual gifts were also then imparted to other Christians by the apostles through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8:14-19; 19:6; Rom. 1:11).
 - e. The only exception to this was in the case of Cornelius’ household (Acts 10:44-46), in which case the Holy Spirit fell on them to demonstrate that God had accepted the Gentiles as well as the Jews (Acts 11:15-18).

4. Now that the miraculous spiritual gifts have ceased, the work of the Holy Spirit continues by different means.
 - a. Today the Holy Spirit still has this same ministry as we noticed above. Now He ministers to us to the same effects as He ministered to the apostles.
 - i. He still teaches all things.
 - ii. He still brings to our remembrance all things that Jesus said.
 - iii. He still testifies about Jesus.
 - iv. He still convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.
 - v. He still guides us into all truth.
 - vi. He still discloses to us what was to come.
 - vii. He still glorifies Christ.
 - viii. He still discloses to us the things of Christ.
 - b. Now He accomplishes all of this through the word of God, which we have in the Bible.
 - i. Make no mistake about it. If these things are being accomplished, then the Holy Spirit is at work!
 - ii. Therefore, as these things are accomplished through the word of God today, the Holy Spirit is working.
 - c. In fact, the Holy Spirit always accomplished these things through the word of God, but until the Bible was complete and confirmed, the word was revealed and accompanied by miraculous spiritual gifts.
 - i. Notice that Paul told the Thessalonian Christians, “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5).
 - ii. Yet, Paul writes that it was the word at work in them: “when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13).
 - iii. Thus, when there was no written, codified New Testament, the word of God was delivered by means of miraculous spiritual gifts. But once it was delivered, it was the word through which the Holy Spirit did His work. See also Colossians 1:5-6; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:22-25.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. Those who charge the churches of Christ with rejecting the modern ministry of the Holy Spirit have misunderstood the true ministry of the Holy Spirit, and therefore they reject His ministry themselves.
- B. Ironically, those who cling to the necessity of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are fixated upon the physical rather than the spiritual. They are refusing to accept what is truly spiritual (the word of God, John 6:63) unless they see a physical demonstration.
- C. The true effects of the Holy Spirit’s work are seen in the persons who are transformed by the word of God. “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14)

CHARGE #5: MEMBERS OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE OPPOSED TO MUSIC IN WORSHIP.

I. AN EXPLANATION OF THE CHARGE

- A. This charge is made because the churches of Christ do not use mechanical instruments of music in their worship assemblies.
 1. The practice in most churches of Christ is to worship God by singing only without the accompaniment of pianos, organs, harps, or other musical instruments.
 2. This is probably the most commonly known aspect about the churches of Christ among the general public.
 3. The churches of Christ are unique in this now because nearly every other church uses instrumental music *today*.
- B. The purpose of this lesson is to defend the belief of members of the churches of Christ regarding music in the worship.
 1. Let it be understood that there is no opposition to musical instruments among the members in general. Many members of the churches of Christ own and play musical instruments. They simply do not play them in worship.

2. Also understand that singing without the accompaniment of musical instruments is still a form of music. The churches of Christ practice and perform music in their assemblies, but that music does not include mechanical instruments.
3. While this is a peculiar belief in the churches of Christ today, it has not always been so. It will be demonstrated that this belief is not a radical departure from tradition, but rather the opposite is true.

II. WHAT DOES GOD WANT?

- A. In all things, a Christian must seek to understand what God desires from man, and he must then present to God that which pleases Him.
 1. “Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” (2 Cor. 5:9)
 2. “...trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.” (Eph. 5:10)
 3. “For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be **filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects**, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Col. 1:9-10, emphasis SED)
- B. From these and other New Testament passages, we see that one must first understand what God’s will is before he can perform His will and please Him.
 1. This concept is simple, but many neglect it by doing what they *think* will please God or doing what pleases men rather than doing what God has revealed as His will.
 2. We know what God wants of us *only because He has told us in His word*. This is true in everything, including worship.
- C. What does God want in worship?
 1. Consider John 4:20-24.
 - a. In verse 20, the Samaritan woman prompted Jesus to comment on the topic of worship. She pointed out the conflict between what the Samaritans taught and what the Jews taught about the correct physical location for worship.
 - b. Jesus answered her first by declaring, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father” (v. 21). Therefore, this debate about the place of worship would soon be irrelevant.
 - c. Now, let us give particular attention to verses 23 and 24: “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
 - i. Jesus indicated that a change was happening. God’s desires for His worshippers were changing.
 - ii. No longer would the place of worship be significant, for God seeks worshippers who *worship in spirit and truth*.
 2. What is this worship “in spirit and truth” that God wants?
 - a. We can understand from this passage that to worship God “in spirit” must be different from worshipping Him in flesh.
 - i. Jesus said, “God is spirit,” meaning that His nature is spiritual rather than physical.
 - ii. By comparison, the worship He desires is also to be spiritual rather than physical.
 - iii. Thus, we can understand that the place of worship, whether on a mountain in Samaria or in a temple in Jerusalem, has no bearing on true *spiritual* worship.
 - b. Worshipping in spirit is in contrast to the fleshly worship done in Jesus’ day.
 - i. Consider Hebrews 9:1-10. Notice the elements of this style of worship according to the Law of Moses.
 - i. There was a physical temple or tabernacle.
 - ii. There was a fleshly priesthood.
 - iii. There were physical sacrifices.
 - iv. *Suitable to this type of worship was mechanical instruments of music.*
 - ii. Now, God’s worship is spiritual:
 - i. There is a spiritual temple or tabernacle (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22).
 - ii. There is a spiritual High Priest (Heb. 4:14-15; 9:11).
 - iii. There is a spiritual priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9).
 - iv. There are spiritual sacrifices (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15).

v. *Suitable for this type of worship is spiritual music, not the music of mechanical instruments.*

3. Thus, we have the commandment, "...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19).
 - a. This is what God desires from His worshippers in regards to musical worship.
 - b. Singing is spiritual worship (as will be demonstrated below), and spiritual worship is true worship, i.e., worship "in spirit and truth."
 - c. Those who seek to justify the use of musical instruments in worship by citing Old Testament law are advocating a return to an inferior, fleshly type of worship.

III. "MAKING MELODY WITH YOUR HEART TO THE LORD"

- A. The phrase "making melody with your heart to the Lord" indicates that the harp, the lyre, and the tambourine of the Old Testament worship have been replaced with the strings of the heart.
 1. The word "melody" is translated from the Greek word "psallo", which means "to twitch, twang; to play a stringed instrument with the fingers" (*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*).
 2. The instrument of our melody is clearly designated as the heart.
 3. This would have been a logical place for the Holy Spirit to endorse instrumental music, but He did not.
- B. The phrase "making melody with your heart to the Lord" also indicates a depth of worship that has meaning.
 1. Christians are not commanded to sing simply because it is enjoyable, beautiful, or pleasing to the ear. These reasons are often used to justify the use of musical instruments in worship, but these neglect the true purposes of music in the worship.
 2. There are a variety of purposes for Christians to sing:
 - a. To be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
 - b. To speak to one another (Eph. 5:19)
 - c. To have the word of Christ dwell in us (Col. 3:16)
 - d. To teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16)
 - e. To express thanksgiving to God (Col. 3:16)
 - f. To express praise to God (Acts 16:25; Jas. 5:13)
 3. These purposes are achieved by communicating through words. It is the words of the songs that give the depth of meaning.
 - a. It is the message conveyed in the words that makes worship in music spiritual.
 - b. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63).
 - c. Paul stated, "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also" (1 Cor. 14:15). This indicates the necessity of understanding the message of the songs we sing.
 4. Singing in the worship is not about excellence in music.
 - a. For singing to be done properly, the mind must be fully engaged upon the words that are sung.
 - b. Therefore, the best singers are not necessarily those who have the best voices or the best musical understanding.
 - c. The best singers are those who sing every word from the heart with understanding.
 5. This meaningful worship cannot be achieved with a musical instrument.
- C. Although the words give the depth of meaning to our worship, there is power in music and singing that gives a benefit.
 1. If there was no benefit to the music, then we would merely speak the words to one another and to God.
 2. The music makes an impact and enables us to remember. Music employs the emotions and gives expression beyond simple speech.

IV. "DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS"

- A. As stated before, in anything that Christians do, we must seek to understand and perform the will of God.
 1. "Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." (Col. 3:17)
 2. To do anything "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is to act on His authority.
- B. Therefore, regarding music in the worship of God, we must seek the authority of Christ just as we do for everything else.
- C. In the New Testament, there are commandments and examples of singing.
 1. Jesus and His disciples (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26)
 2. Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25)

3. 1 Cor. 14:15
4. Eph. 5:19
5. "...singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." (Col. 3:16)
6. "Let him sing praises." (Jas. 5:13)

D. However, there are no commandments or examples in the New Testament for the use of musical instruments in worship.

E. Therefore, the only authority for music that we have from Christ is to offer vocal music in worship.

V. WHY IS THERE ANY DEBATE ABOUT MUSIC IN THE WORSHIP?

A. The Scriptural evidence is strong and convincing that God's desire for His worshippers regarding music is singing alone. So then, why is there controversy?

B. At one time, there was no debate because no church used instrumental music.

1. The use of mechanical instruments in worship is a relatively new concept to all churches (nineteenth century).
2. History records that musical instruments were unknown in the worship of all who called themselves Christians. Notice these quotes:
 - a. "... the first Christians were of too spiritual a fibre to substitute lifeless instruments for or to use them to accompany the human voice." – *Catholic Encyclopaedia*
 - b. "The execution of Byzantine church music by instruments, or even the accompaniment of sacred chanting by instruments was ruled out by the Eastern Fathers as being incompatible with the pure, solemn, spiritual character of the religion of Christ." - Constantine Cavarnos, *Byzantine Sacred Music* (Greek Orthodox Church)
 - c. "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to Him." – John Calvin (founder of the Presbyterian Church), *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*
 - d. "I have no objection to instruments of music, in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen." – John Wesley (founder of the Methodist Church)
 - e. "Music as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity." – Adam Clarke (commentator, prominent Methodist teacher)
 - f. "Martin Luther called the organ an 'ensign of Baal'." – *McClintock & Strong's Encyclopedia* (quote attributed to the founder of the Lutheran Church)
 - g. "I would as soon attempt to pray to God with machinery as to sing to Him with machinery." – Charles H. Spurgeon, (prominent Baptist preacher)
3. These men are not quoted because they have any divine authority, but rather these quotes prove that the modern practices of these churches have departed from their former tradition, which was to worship with vocal music only.

C. The debate exists now because most churches have returned to worshipping God in the flesh rather than in spirit.

1. This is not because it is God's will but because it is man's will.
2. God's will has not changed from the beginning of the church. His word in the New Testament still stands as the standard.

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. This issue has long been associated with the churches of Christ, but the real issue is with those who have departed from the will of God regarding music in worship.
- B. The churches of Christ should not follow the denominations into this error any more than they should follow the denominations into any other error.
- C. Christ is the Head of the church, and we have His will for the church regarding music and worship and any other topic. Let us follow Him and not men.