

# It Is Written

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## **Do We Need an Unbroken Chain of Believers to Establish the True Church? (God's universal law of reproduction in force.)**

By Randy Blackaby

The Catholic church, by tracing a historical path back to the First Century, attempts to establish itself as the New Testament church. In similar fashion, some Protestant denominations, such as the Baptist church, make the same attempt.

Can the church of Christ trace an unbroken historical chain of believers back to Pentecost? It is doubtful. Whether faithful Christians have existed all through the centuries since Christ is difficult, if not impossible, to document.

Does that mean that the church of Christ didn't begin until the 18th or 19th century, with the efforts of men like Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, James O'Kelly, and others? The answer is no!

The reason ties intimately to God's universal law of reproduction. Since the creation, God has ordered that the things created reproduce after their own kind (Genesis 1:11-12). This applies in the spiritual realm, as well as the physical. We "reap what we sow" (Galatians 5:7).

What does the Bible teach is the spiritual seed of the kingdom? It is the Word of God. We learn in 1 Peter 1:23 that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever." Luke 8:11 makes the same point.

On the day of Pentecost, what did the apostles preach that resulted in men and women becoming Jesus' disciples, or Christians? Was it not the Word of God, the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation? Notice that in Acts 2, based on their hearing and obeying the Word of God, the Lord added those people to the church.

For argument's sake, let us suppose that everyone abandoned the truth for ten or more centuries. If at the end of that time, some people read or heard the Word of God (the seed) and obeyed it, what would they be? Would they not be Christians, disciples of Christ, members of the Lord's body, the church? Certainly!

Just as a seed of corn preserved for centuries, when planted, would produce corn today, so the Word of God, planted after centuries, would produce a godly product-born-again Christians. It would produce the same thing it produced on the Day of Pentecost.

The wonder of God's Word is that it is incorruptible. Men may corrupt the faith and practices of the church, but God's Word remains unaffected. It doesn't change, and it doesn't die. Anytime it is planted in the heart of a sincere and honest truth seeker, it produces life in that individual. This seed always produces the same thing--Christians.

One of the wonderful things about God's Word is that it doesn't depend on a human continuum of faithfulness to do its work. And so, if men and women of our generation become totally faithless, there remains hope for the future. As long as God's Word exists (remember, it is incorruptible and abides forever) it has the power to save. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Romans 1:16) And, when men are saved, God adds them to His church. "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47)

Our Lord's church can be restored at any point in history. Simply replant the seed.

## Five Views of Baptism - What Is Your View?

By Steven Wallace

Nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16) To the simple, unbiased, and unprejudiced mind, Jesus' statement is clear and easy to understand. It is as easy to understand a doctor's statement, "He who eats his food and digests it will live; but he who does not eat will die." All of us would know that unless we eat and digest, we will die. However, for those who have allied themselves with human creeds, and have been depraved with worldly wisdom, Jesus' simple statement becomes confusing and contradicting. Although the Bible ALWAYS places water baptism (in Jesus' name) before salvation, men have sought ways to undermine His authority and confuse the simplicity of our Lord's teaching.

### ATHEIST'S VIEW

For example, the Atheist would say, "He who believes and is baptized will NOT be saved." He rejects God's existence and the Bible's authority. Unbelievers believe there is no God; yet, to prove such a position, the unbeliever himself would have to be "God." For one to know that there is no God, he would have to be everywhere, see everything, and know everything! Jesus had the Atheist in mind when he said, "he who believes not shall be condemned," and again, "he who does not believe is condemned already." (John 3:18) Truly "the fool has said in his heart 'There is no God.' " (Proverbs 14:1)

### UNIVERSALIST'S VIEW

The Universalist approaches the Scripture with the biased belief that God is a God of love only, and therefore, He can never condemn anyone. Universalists say, "He who believes NOT and is NOT baptized shall be saved." While such a faith accepts the actuality of God, it rejects His word and leaves, nonetheless, a corrupt and misguided picture of Deity. Warning: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48)

### CATHOLIC'S VIEW

The Catholic comes along and teaches, "He who believes NOT and is baptized shall be saved." I say this as a former Catholic, who was sprinkled as a baby. Catholics baptize babies because of the erroneous belief that they inherit sin (Ezekiel 18:20); however, Bible baptism was NEVER administered to babies. Jesus taught that babies are safe (Luke 18:15-17). Notwithstanding, subjects of Bible baptism must first believe (see again Mark 16:16); but faith comes by hearing the word of the Lord (Romans 10:17). How can babies believe when they cannot understand the word of the Lord? Can they also confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37)? False doctrine causes people to believe unbelievable things.

### PROTESTANT'S VIEW

The Baptist says, "He who believes and is NOT baptized shall be saved." But is that what Jesus said? Is it Deity's view? No amount of human manipulation will change the eternal truth in Mark 16:16. Beware of all these "NOTS." They are formulated by men, in the devil's "tale" to cheat you out of your soul.

### JESUS' VIEW

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15,16)