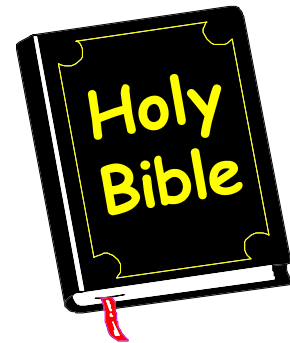


# **The Way Of The Lord**



versus

# **The Doctrines Of Men**



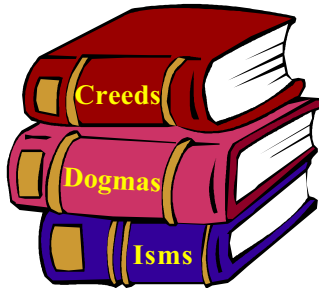
**Examining & Refuting  
Prevalent False Religious  
Doctrines**

**Prepared By Jeff Smith**

# The Way Of The Lord



versus



# The Doctrines Of Men

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# The Way Of The Lord

vs.

# The Doctrines Of Men

## Examining & Refuting Prevalent False Religious Doctrines

### Lesson 1 – General Introduction

**Psa. 133:1** “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!”

**1 Cor. 1:10** “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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.”

**Eph. 4:3-6, 11-16** “...being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all...And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

**Jn. 17:20-21** “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.”

*[all emphasis mine, JBS]*

The theme that ties these passages together is unity. The psalmist David extolled the praiseworthiness of brethren in unity. The apostles wrote that saints should make unity their goal, for God has made unity possible. Jesus, on the eve of giving Himself to die, prayed for unity among all believers. His death not only unified lost man with his God, but also would unify men together in a common belief. It would be an understatement to say unity is important.

## **The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men**

### **Lesson 1**

However, it doesn't take much effort to see the "religious world" is not unified.

- situations in the Middle East testify to centuries of bitter strife and enmity over, among many things, religious differences
- in our own nation, tacit admissions of religious differences => Baptists aren't Catholics who aren't Methodists who aren't Lutherans, etc.
  - just think of all the legal requirements that forbid discrimination on a religious basis
  - this illustrates that our country not only tolerates religious diversity but also encourages it (i.e. the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution)

Some would counter that we have unity in religion, a "unity in diversity." Such thinking represents the current trend in our culture to accentuate our differences to maintain one's own individuality. Emphasizing how we are different is said to bring strength to any movement. The Scripture doesn't teach "unity in diversity" in the sense that all the different churches, despite their different practices and beliefs, are unified under Jesus Christ. This has become a popular movement in religion in recent decades. In what has been termed, among other labels, "The Grace-Fellowship Movement," proponents claim we should ignore our religious differences and instead focus on where we have similarities. Even some from among our own brethren have swallowed this dangerous error. Such thinking makes a mockery of unity or fellowship, so watering it down that it eventually means nothing. The apostle Paul would disagree with this. The only "unity in diversity" Paul would have recognized would have been the difference in spiritual gifts and talents 1<sup>st</sup> century saints had been given by God (**1 Cor. 12:4-11, 24b-25**). Remember...in this same letter, he exhorted them to "speak the same thing"...that there be "no divisions among them."

Is unity achievable? Is what we're talking about so "pie in the sky" that it exists only as a dream? Some say "No," unity is not achievable. The Scripture would contend, "Yes," unity is not only possible, it is expected. If it was unachievable, why would the Lord have prayed for it to exist? Why would inspired writers enjoin such a requirement upon us?

The only way for true unity to exist is for all men to lay aside their individual religious prejudices and preconceptions and all agree that the Scripture, and Scripture alone, will be the source of authority in what we believe, teach, and practice. If all agreed to do this, then we could have the unity Jesus prayed for and the apostles instructed us to maintain. Yet, because man's willfulness has always gotten in the way, churches spring up for one reason or another. And the consequence is division, not unity.

In the midst of all this division, Jesus doesn't throw up His hands and sadly walk away, feeling as if He died in vain. He doesn't even want us to react in such a faithless way. Rather, He calls upon us to be a beacon for truth. All of us are to be actively involved in teaching the gospel's saving message to any and all who would hear it (**Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 8:4; 2 Tim. 2:2**). We must not forget...the "religious world" was not united in New Testament days, either. There were multiple religious sects, or "denominations" (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc.). Jesus joined none of them. Neither did His apostles join any such religious group. As a result, we should not join any of them, either. Today, man should be content to let the Lord add him to His church following his obedience to the gospel (**Acts 2:40-42, 46-47**).

## **The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men**

### **Lesson 1**

Our focus in this study will not be an examination of every different religious organization in existence (an impossible task). Nor will it be our purpose to familiarize ourselves with the “major” denominations (still a daunting task). Simply scrolling through Churches A, B, C,... to learn their origins, founders, etc. is merely an academic exercise in fact-finding. It would not profit very much.

A New Testament Christian doesn't need to spend years studying religious error to lead his family members or friends out of that error. (Bank tellers aren't schooled ad nauseam on every possible sample of counterfeit currency. They are taught what is a genuine currency note, its characteristics, etc. They learn that. Then, anything else they receive that is not what they know to be genuine is, therefore, counterfeit, and to be rejected). Studying to be a better teacher of the lost should be conducted in the same way. All of us need to be constantly studying truth (**2 Tim. 2:15**).

However, we do recognize the wisdom in examining false religious doctrine. Paul said we shouldn't be “ignorant of Satan's schemes” (**2 Cor. 2:11**). One such “scheme” is to disguise himself as an “angel of light” (**2 Cor. 11:14**). False teachers who follow him also disguise themselves (**v. 15**). Jesus told His disciples to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees” (**Mt. 16:6-12**). He wanted them to be somewhat familiar of what those religious hypocrites taught. So, a basic understanding of prevalent religious error is always in order. We need to study it in light of revealed Divine truth. Such efforts could give us confidence in knowing how to better refute the error. Religious error crosses denominational lines. While churches are different, most believe much of the same error in one respect or another.

Our task is to learn and show others the simple **“Way Of The Lord”** and how superior it is to the uninspired **“Doctrines Of Men.”** Along the way it would be good to become better acquainted with some of these man-made doctrines and how to easily refute them from the Bible. Of course, our motivation should never be to shame, ridicule, or even argue with those who believe such error, but to help them see the truth for their own salvation.

Jesus chided men for elevating their own doctrines in “transgressing the commandments of God” (**Mt. 15:1-9**). The power behind such uninspired opinions is man's own dissatisfaction with the Scripture or his dissatisfaction with other uninspired opinions of men. On the contrary, the power behind the Lord's way is the crucified & resurrected Son of God who has been glorified and exalted to His rightful place as Lord, authorized to rule His kingdom (**Eph. 1:17-23**). Remembering this one fundamental difference will cause us to cling to the Lord more closely, carefully following His word. It should also aid us in our quest to become better teachers of the lost.

If all accepted these premises, we would all be “brethren” in the purest sense of the word. Then could we say with David, “how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.”

# The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

## Lesson 2

### No Greater Name Under Heaven Given Among Men

#### Introduction

Before studying specific denominational doctrines and their scriptural refutations, it is probably necessary to spend some time in the history of some of the mainstream denominations of men. Believers in God and followers of Jesus Christ, by necessity, are going to have to be called something for purposes of identification. Therefore, this lesson will, in a very broad sense, contrast the notions that men have created through the centuries with the simple truths revealed in the Bible. We hope the reason for this lesson will be readily apparent when we finish it.

**NOTE:** For the more interested student who desires to know much more than we will cover, several good sources can be recommended for additional study.



The church of Christ  
Est. 30 A.D. in Jerusalem  
Founder: Jesus Christ (**Mt. 16:18**)

What name do His followers wear? \_\_\_\_\_

Where is this first found in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this a fulfillment of prophecy? If so, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it significant that we do not read of this name earlier in the history of the church? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this name so meaningful? (**cp. Acts 4:12**) \_\_\_\_\_



The Catholic Church  
Est. 606 A.D. in Rome  
Founder: Boniface III

“Catholic” means universal. Eventually, church elders began extending their authority beyond “the flock among them” (**cp. 1 Pet. 5:2**). In the 6th century, 5 “patriarchs” (head bishops of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome) were overseeing all the apostate churches. Boniface III (patriarch of Rome) declared himself “Universal Bishop.”



The Lutheran Church  
Est. 1530 A.D. in Germany  
Founder: Followers of Martin Luther

Oldest of “Protestant” churches (those who protested Catholicism). Luther was a Catholic priest who grew weary of corrupt practices such as the selling of indulgences and the wicked lifestyles of priests. To his credit, he sought to reform the Catholic Church, not start another one. However, after his excommunication, his followers used his published catechisms to begin the Lutheran Church.

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 2



The Presbyterian Church  
Est. 1540 A.D. in Switzerland  
Founder: John Calvin

Calvin became influenced by Luther's writings, as well as those of an ancient 4th century theologian name Augustine. Given Calvin's desire for strict governance in the churches, his followers eventually adopted the name "Presbyterian" most likely because of **1 Tim. 4:14**, a reference to the presbytery (eldership). Entire identity of the church centers around its government. Each "presbytery" contains several churches.



The Protestant Episcopal Church  
Est. 1578 A.D. in California  
Founder: Francis Drake

This is the American version of the the Church of England, founded by King Henry VIII in 1534. He revolted against the Catholic Church when the pope refused to let him divorce his wife and marry someone else. This began the "state church" of England. The first Anglican service conducted on this continent was led by Francis Drake in 1578. Eventually, this church immigrated through the colonies, almost being destroyed in the American Revolution (her priests were still loyal to the British crown). In 1783, it began using its present-day name.



The Baptist Church  
Est. 1607 A.D. in England  
Founder: John Smyth

Smyth was in the clergy of the Church of England and a member of the English Separatists (believers in the separation of church and state). He opposed the Church of England with the King as head of the church. He rejected infant baptism and believed, among other things, solely in immersion; thus, the name "Baptists" was ascribed to his followers.



The Methodist Church  
Est. 1729 A.D. in England  
Founders: John & Charles Wesley

Sons of a Church of England clergyman, the Wesleys opposed the rigid, cold, and indifferent conditions of the Church of England. They began meeting with small groups which became increasingly popular. They held to strict methods of study, diet, exercise, etc. Outsiders eventually began calling them the "Methodists."



The Mormon Church  
Est. 1830 A.D. in Utah  
Founder: Joseph Smith

In the 1820's, Smith claimed to have received a vision from God, in which he saw Christ along with a prophet named Moroni. Supposedly, he was shown golden plates on which were written God's revelation now known as the Book of Mormon (translated in 1829). All churches were corrupt and the Dark Ages had perverted the gospel. He was to re-establish the true church (comprised of "Latter Day" saints) on the earth.

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 2



Jehovah's Witnesses  
Est. 1884 A.D. in Pittsburgh  
Founder: Charles T. Russell

Russell was an avid reader and preacher who firmly believed in Christ's second coming. This group has made various vain predictions of the Lord's coming through the years. Their organization, *The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society*, controls all their churches and distributes millions of tracts and periodicals annually. They reject Christ as the Son of God and believe in only 1 personage of God - Jehovah the Father.

Other churches and branches off these could be cited, but we have enough to see the basic "religious landscape" in our country. Despite the professed intentions of these churches in following the Lord, consider this brief history, compare it to the theme presented in the *Introduction*, and ask this 1 question:

### Upon what are all these churches united?

In his epic play *Romeo & Juliet*, William Shakespeare writes in Act 2, Scene 2...

*"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet;..."*

This might make for good literature, but it does not harmonize with what the Scripture teaches. The Bible says there is something in a name. When people decide to simply call themselves "Christians" they are refusing to wear any other name. No other name under heaven has been given men that is as good as the name of Christ. That is the thrust of **Acts 4:12**. When men wear any other names, they glorify men or doctrines; they do not honor the Son of God who died for them. When men choose to wear man-made names, they will not achieve the unity prayed for by Jesus and encouraged upon all through His word.

### Questions

1. Read again **Eph. 4:4**. Consider along with it **Eph. 1:22-23**, and write below how the material in this lesson fails to properly show what these verses teach.
2. Read **Eph. 3:10**. If we grant the notion that all churches are part of the "universal" church spoken of this verse, what obvious problem exists in complying with this passage?
3. Read **Eph. 4:11-16**. What did God hope to accomplish through what He gave to us? (**vv. 12-13, 16**) What did He hope to prevent? (**v. 14**) However, what reality is ours because of the facts contained in this lesson?



## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 3

# CALVINISM: What Is It, And How Do We Refute It?

## Introduction

Probably the best place to begin in refutations of religious error would be what is most prevalent. That would be a system of beliefs known as Calvinism. Though it bears the name of John Calvin (founder of the Presbyterian Church – p. 5), it is not just limited to that one denomination. Nearly every man-made denomination accepts into belief and practice one or all aspects of Calvinism, either the doctrine itself or the consequences of the doctrine. This body of religious error touches on important themes such as sin, salvation, even faith.

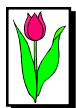
If we can gain a basic understanding of the errors of Calvinism, and how to successfully answer them from the Scripture, we'll have covered a vast majority of man-made religions.

**Note:** An important key to remember when studying Calvinism is the **sovereignty of God**. To the Calvinist, God's sovereignty must never be violated. It is the clear rationale behind most of the tenets of Calvinism.

## The "TULIP" Acrostic

When mentioning or studying Calvinism, most people think of the infamous "TULIP" acrostic that helps us remember the 5 tenets of Calvinism. John Calvin did not come up with this acrostic; it was the result of the Council of Dort in 1618-19 (Calvin died in 1564). However, it does contain the basic elements of Calvin's theology, and is appropriate for our study on Calvinism.

## Total Hereditary Depravity



Many believe that all people are in sin because their parents were sinners. Thus, we have all inherited our parents' sins and guilt. The Catholic Church is the biggest proponent of this doctrine, as well as all the denominations that have not strayed too far from the Catholic Church (Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists).

The primary advocate of this doctrine was Augustine of Hippo, an African theologian from the latter 4th to early 5th centuries. He came to the conclusion that man's sinfulness, particularly his own, was directly attributable to Adam's fall from God's grace (**Gen. 3**). He viewed God's grace in Eden as an "enabling power" or that which enabled Adam & Eve to choose to do right. Once they rebelled and were cast out of Eden, they (and all the rest of humanity) were bereft of this power. Here is where the primary doctrine of depravity began to exist.

Hand in hand with this belief is the denial of man's free will, or moral agency. Apart from God's enabling power, man cannot do anything good. *"The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God..."* [Methodist Discipline (Creed of Methodist Church); Article VIII].

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 3

Some of the most often-used passages believers in hereditary depravity will use will be **Psa. 51:5; 58:3; Rom. 5:12,18;** and **Eph. 2:1-3**. Using these same passages, be prepared to show in the spaces provided below how they do not teach hereditary depravity:

**Psa. 51:5**

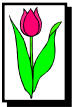
**Rom. 5:12, 18**

**Psa. 58:3**

**Eph. 2:1-3**

What other passage(s) would you use to refute the false doctrine of total hereditary depravity?

### Unconditional Election



This is the beginning of the process to recover man lost in his inherited sin. Still emphasizing God's sovereignty, Calvinists will contend that lost man can do nothing of himself to regain his fellowship with God. Rather, God must choose or "elect" those whom He will save. God is said to do this "unconditionally" in that we can do nothing to merit whether or not He chooses us.

In Calvinistic theology, unconditional election naturally follows total depravity. *"We believe that, all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just: merciful, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition all whom He in His eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness has elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works; just, in leaving others in the fall & perdition wherein they have involved themselves" [Belgic Confession (Presbyterian Church); Article XVI].*

Calvinists argue that God made His choices before the foundation of the world, using passages like **Eph. 1:4** and **2 Tim. 1:9**. Other passages Calvinists use to support God's sovereign & unconditional election of man are **Rom. 8:29; 9:11;** and **1 Pet. 2:8-9**. Using these passages, be prepared to show in the spaces provided how they do not teach an unconditional election of God:

**Rom. 8:29**

**1 Pet. 2:8-9**

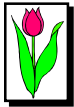
**Rom. 9:11**

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 3

What other passage(s) would you use to refute the false doctrine of an unconditional election?

#### Limited Atonement



This part of Calvinism touches directly on the atoning death of Christ. His death on Calvary was only for those whom God unconditionally elected to save. The Calvinist argues that since all men will not be saved as a result of Christ's redeeming work anyway, a limitation must be admitted as factual. Therefore, Jesus' sacrifice was only for the elect.

Calvinism has a direct correlation between the Father's redemptive *plan* and the Son's redemptive *work*. Just as the objects of the Father's love are particular, definite and limited (those unconditionally chosen), so are the objects of the Son's death. For the Son to die for any who are outside of God's sovereign choice for salvation would be incongruous with the eternal plan. This, the Calvinist says, underscores the harmony and unity that exists between the Father & the Son.

Some of the Calvinist's favorite passages that supposedly teach Christ's limited atonement are **Mt. 1:21**; **Jn. 10:15-16**; and **Heb. 9:15**. Using these passages, be prepared to show in the spaces provided below how they do not teach a limited atonement:

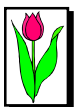
**Mt. 1:21**

**Heb. 9:15**

**Jn. 10:15-16**

What other passage(s) would you use to refute the false doctrine of a limited atonement?

#### Irresistible Grace



This is the part of Calvinism that brings the Holy Spirit into play. The more well-known adherents to this tenet include the Protestant denominations, most notably the Pentecostal groups. Keeping in mind the key to Calvinism (*God's sovereignty*), God is responsible for everything and depraved man in sin can do nothing on his own. Thus, God must act on man's behalf; man can't even gain his own faith apart from God's intervention.

The Holy Spirit comes directly upon the heart of the elect (what we've come to call the "zapping"), and imparts to him His grace (often called man's "experience of grace" or "experience of faith"). What results is such statements from these folks like, "I wouldn't trade this feeling in my heart for a tall stack of Bibles!"

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 3

The reason for God's grace being "irresistible" is because man cannot oppose the sovereign choice of God. If such an important choice were left up sinful man, no one would ever be saved because of our depravity.

Favorite passages of the Calvinist for the doctrine of irresistible grace are **Jn. 6:44; 10:16; Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 15:10; Eph. 2:8-9; and 2 Tim. 1:9**. Using these passages, be prepared to show in the spaces provided below how they do not teach the irresistibility of God's grace:

**Jn. 6:44**

**1 Cor. 15:10**

**Jn. 10:16**

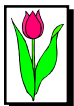
**Eph. 2:8-9**

**Acts 16:14**

**2 Tim. 1:9**

What other passage(s) would you use to refute the false doctrine of the irresistible grace of God?

### Preservation Of The Saints



This is the last petal of Calvin's "flower" and, the Calvinist would argue, is the logical conclusion of God's sovereign plan to save man. It is by far the most popularly held tenet of Calvinism. Known more by its other name ("one saved, always saved"), the vast majority of religious people (Catholic or Protestant) believe this. Even those who would deny the other tenets of Calvinism adopt this one because, as they reason, it brings so much comfort to them and harmonizes with their view of God ("He is love" and "He wouldn't really condemn anyone to hell").

Once the elect have been acted upon by God's irresistible grace (i.e., the Holy Spirit), they can never be lost again. For one to lose his salvation after being saved would be equivalent to overriding God and His sovereignty. If man could lose his salvation, Calvinists assert that would amount to an indictment of God as irresponsibly entrusting man with something precious (salvation) that he is prone to lose. *"They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally or finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved" [Westminster Confession (Presbyterian Church); Chapter XIX].*

Some of the passages used by the Calvinist's doctrine of preservation of the saints are **Mt. 18:12-14; Jn. 10:28-29; and Rom. 8:28-39**. Using these passages, be prepared to show in the spaces provided on the following page how they do not teach a preservation of the saints:

**The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men**  
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**Mt. 18:12-14**

**Rom. 8:28-39**

**Jn. 10:28-29**

What other passage(s) would you use to refute the Calvinist's teaching on preservation of saints?

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 4

# Doctrinal Outgrowths From Calvinism

## Introduction

Having studied the basic concepts of Calvinism, we next focus on doctrines that have arisen among the churches of men because of Calvinistic beliefs and teaching. To remain consistent with the tenets examined in the previous lesson, Calvinists have concocted various doctrines and practices which have become the mainstay of man-made denominations. Using what we have just learned about Calvinism should make it easier for us to understand what they practice and know how to refute these errors from the Scripture.

While we cannot cover every doctrine that has arisen because of the teachings of Calvinism, we will focus on 3 primary ones: infant baptism, faith only, and the direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

## **Infant Baptism**

As we already know, Calvinism asserts that man's sin problem originates in inheriting Adam's original sin [*see pp. 7-8*]. Babies, only minutes old outside the womb, are said to be tainted with sin. To correct this problem, infant baptism was invented. By the beginning of the 3rd century, the "baptism" of infants had become an accepted fact. The primary adherents to this doctrine are Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians.

At the outset, there was the difficulty in harmonizing their desire for this practice with the Biblical teaching on baptism. "Baptizo" (*Greek word that is the source of English word "baptize"*) means "to dip repeatedly, to immerse, submerge" [*Thayer Greek-English Lexicon, p. 94*]. Obviously, this cannot be done safely to an infant. Therefore, they came up with the practice of sprinkling little droplets of water upon a newborn and calling it "baptism." This is a clear example of submitting the Scripture to human will rather than the other way around. They understood the Biblical teaching of water washing away sin (baptism), but twisted the Scripture to fit their own pre-conceived doctrine of inherited sin (**cp. 2 Pet. 3:16**).

1. What passages in the New Testament teach the nature of baptism?
2. What passages in the New Testament show the proper candidates for baptism?
3. Be able to refute the use of **Acts 16:33** as justification for infant baptism.

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

### Lesson 4

4. **BONUS QUESTION** => If the doctrines of inherited sin & infant baptism are true, how have proponents gotten around the quandary of Jesus being born into sin?

#### Faith Only & Imputation

Martin Luther, de facto founder of the Lutheran Church [see p. 4], was the first to declare man's salvation was by *sola fide* (Latin for "faith alone"). He believed and taught this because of his opposition to Catholic doctrine that justification is sacerdotal. Catholicism taught that justification is accomplished sacramentally through the ministrations of the priesthood in the Church (the Church's "7 Sacraments"). It was, in essence, a system of works, works, works.

Luther, like all the other reformers, sought to change the abuses he saw in the Catholic Church. His view of justification was not due to man's works, but rather by God's grace. Man can be justified (pronounced free of guilt, innocent) by his "faith alone" in God. By "faith" he meant man's "experience of faith" given him by God (remember...God is sovereign and man is depraved in sin. God must grant man his faith; thus, man's "experience of faith").

To complete his "faith alone" doctrine of justification, Luther held to the imputation of Christ's perfect life to sinful man. Man, being depraved in sin, could not stand before God without appearing sinful, even if he is one of the elect unconditionally chosen by God. To correct this, God imputes the perfect life of Christ to sinful man. Therefore, when God looks upon such a man, He does not see a life depraved in sin; He sees the perfect life of His Son imputed to such a sinner.

Not all churches adhere to this doctrine of imputation. Among modern-day protestant denominations, many Southern Baptist Churches do. But even for those who do not subscribe, almost all man-made churches nowadays believe and teach, in one way or another, the doctrine of *sola fide*..."faith alone."

1. Where does the New Testament teach about faith alone?
2. How could **Jn. 12:42-43** be used to refute the error of "faith alone"?
3. What does **Rom. 4:3-7** teach about imputation?

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### Lesson 4

4. **RESEARCH QUESTION** => Using Abraham as an example, look up the different occurrences in his life where God “counted” [KJV], “accounted” [NKJV], “reckoned” [NASV], or “credited” [NIV] his faith to him. Try to put them in chronological order. Once you have this completed, what does this examination teach us?

#### Direct Indwelling Of The Holy Spirit

The Calvinist brings the Holy Spirit into play with his concept of Irresistible Grace [see pp. 9-10]. The Holy Spirit is said to operate directly upon the heart of the sinner to save him. After man's salvation, the Holy Spirit is said to lead and guide the believer in all he does. In the most extreme view, “faith healers” claim miraculous power, given them by the Holy Spirit, to heal the sick, cast out demons, etc. Thus, the Pentecostal religious groups are the most ardent proponents of this doctrine. To deny this is to be a heretic in the minds of those who believe and teach it.

Does the Holy Spirit dwell within the child of God? The truth is too plain to deny...yes, He does. We are taught this in passages like **Acts 5:32; Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; and 1 Jn. 3:24**. While these verses teach the Holy Spirit does dwell within the Christian, they do not say HOW He indwells. To answer that question, we must let other passages in the Bible instruct us.

When asked for Biblical support for these beliefs, proponents usually cite **Jn. 14:25; 15:26; and 16:7-13** as proof. However, we need to remember to whom Jesus was talking and for what purpose. He was addressing His apostles and promising help for their future work as His witnesses or ambassadors. No one else was ever given this work nor helped miraculously in such a way. Therefore, it is not proper to use these passages as proof texts for the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit today.

1. Based on **Jn. 16:8-11** and **1 Cor. 2:10**, what is the work of the Holy Spirit?
2. How does the Holy Spirit accomplish this work => directly or through some medium? To help answer this question, complete the charts on the following page:



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***How The Holy Spirit Reached The Hearts Of Sinners In The First Century***

**Saving faith produced by the WORD revealed by the Holy Spirit**

**Acts 15:7** How did the Gentiles believe? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 18:8** How did the Corinthians believe? \_\_\_\_\_

**Examples of conversions recorded in the book of Acts**

**Acts 2:36-41** How were the Jews converted? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 8:5-12** How were the Samaritans converted? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 8:25-29** How was the Ethiopian converted? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 16:29-34** How was the Philippian jailer converted? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 18:4-8** How were the Corinthians converted? \_\_\_\_\_

**The power of the Holy Spirit-inspired WORD**

**1 Pet. 1:23** What is it able to produce? \_\_\_\_\_

**Jas. 1:21** What is it able to do? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 2:37** What is it able to do? (**cp. Jn. 16:8**) \_\_\_\_\_

**Jn. 6:44-45** What is it able to do? \_\_\_\_\_

**Things attributed to the Holy Spirit are also attributed to the WORD**

**Jn. 3:5** What happens to the sinner? \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Pet. 1:23** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Cor. 6:11** What happens to the sinner? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 11:14** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Pet. 1:2** What happens to the sinner? \_\_\_\_\_

**Jn. 17:17** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Cor. 6:11** What happens to the sinner? \_\_\_\_\_

**Eph. 5:26** \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men**

### **Lesson 5**

# **Is God Really “Three In One”?**

### **Introduction**

In this lesson we examine one final area of confusion and division in religion...the concept of the Godhead. Some prefer to call it the “Holy Trinity” while some object to this as an unscriptural phrase. Whatever you want to call it, the debate is over the notion of God existing in 3 distinct Personalities: a Father, a Son, and a Spirit. ***We affirm the Godhead does exist.***

In conversing with others about this topic, we will not find much disagreement among the more prevalent denominations. Catholicism and mainstream Protestants (Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians) basically believe and teach what we do. If there is any difference at all, it may be found in some having the idea that the Holy Spirit is more along the lines of a “fog-like cloud” or some type of energy force rather than Him being a Divine Person or Personality. Obviously, this is erroneous. Where we’ll find the majority of those who have different ideas about the existence of the Godhead will be among the Watchtower Witnesses, Mormons, Muslims, and the Oneness Pentecostals (or “Jesus Only” believers). They either deny the existence of the Godhead, or believe in some other “version” of it.

This lesson is vitally important because if one does not have a Biblical understanding of who God is and what He has done for mankind, nothing else he or she does religiously matters. ***The concept of God is absolutely at the foundation of everything.*** Respect for who He is depends on properly understanding His nature and His work. The previous lessons in this series all centered on doctrines regarding man’s predicament in sin and how he becomes reconciled to God. This final lesson focuses on God’s nature. If a religious doctrine portrays any member of the Godhead in such a way that contradicts the clear teaching of the Scripture, He is, in essence, being assaulted, denigrated, and robbed of His Godhood. We let the Bible speak for itself, and want whatever member of the Godhead is being discussed (whether it is God the Father as *Planner*, God the Son as *Redeemer*, or God the Spirit as *Revealer*) to be accurately portrayed: as the eternal God who is all powerful, all knowing, and worthy of praise, devotion, and obedience.

1. As a practical beginning to such discussions, how could **Gen. 2:23-24** and **Mt. 19:5-6** be used to illustrate the concept of 3 Divine Personages existing in 1?
  
2. What passage(s) would you use to support the existence of the Godhead or plurality of Divine Persons?

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#### God the Father

The concept of “Father” (one in the role of ultimate authority in a family) denotes that He is the *supreme* authoritative Member of the Godhead. Both the Son and the Spirit always appear to be subject to Him (**cp. Jn. 8:28-29; 14:26**). When all of God’s dealings with humanity come to an end, the work of the Son & the Spirit will be complete. The Father will be the *sole* Sovereign (**cp. 1 Cor. 15:24-28**). The Father is the One who has always planned for His people (some might think of Him as a “Mastermind”), and then delegated duties to others (whether the Son, the Spirit, or human agents) to accomplish those plans.

Textually, when a passage is speaking about God, unless that passage or other supporting passages clearly indicate a specific Member of the Godhead is being referenced, one can generally assume that the Father is the One under consideration.

Of the 3 members of the Godhead, only the Father did not come to earth. Jesus came, being His “exact representation” (**Heb. 1:3; Jn. 14:6-11**). The Holy Spirit came to reveal truth, having searched out the depths of the Father’s mind (**1 Cor. 2:9-12**). Thus, we see the Father’s concern for our lost condition.

The Watchtower Witnesses emphasize the Bible’s teachings on the Father to the exclusion of the other Divine Persons of the Godhead. They reason God is *monotheistic* (a 1-being God). *“Monotheism in its purest form does not allow for a Trinity...The Old Testament is strictly monotheistic. God is a single person being. The idea that a Trinity is to be found there...is utterly without foundation”* [“Should You Believe In The Trinity?”, Watchtower Bible & Tract Society Publication, p. 12]. They claim there can only be one God, often citing passages like **Deut. 6:4; Isa. 46:9; and Eph. 4:6**.

Muslims do essentially the same thing. God is “Allah”, and they claim He *“has no son or partner, and that none has the right to be worshiped but Him alone. He is the true God and every other deity is false”* [Islamic website “A Brief Illustrated Guide To Understanding Islam” – [www.islam-guide.com](http://www.islam-guide.com)]

3. Be able to explain how the following passages show the Father’s plans for our redemption:  
**Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:1-6; 2 Tim. 1:9-10.**

4. Use **Jn. 14:26 & 1 Cor. 2:12** as proof texts that the Holy Spirit’s work is according to the Father’s planning.

## The Way Of The Lord vs. The Doctrines Of Men

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#### God the Son

It is with respect to this Member of the Godhead that we find the **most** controversy. One finds responses to Jesus being God in the flesh that run the entire gamut:

- ◆ Some who avidly proclaim His deity (believers in what the Scripture teaches)
- ◆ Some who flatly deny Him any God-like qualities (Watchtower Witnesses & Muslims)
- ◆ Some who teach Jesus is God's Son and worthy of worship, but who teach other things that are contrary to how He is portrayed in the Scripture (Mormons)
- ◆ Some portray Him as the only God => He is Father, Son, & Spirit ("Jesus Only")

As one begins to look at the Biblical passages that address whether or not Jesus is God, the verses that first come to mind are the claims Jesus made Himself as to being God. In **Jn. 4:26**, He said to the woman at Jacob's well, "I who speak to you am *He*" (the Messiah). In **Jn. 8:24**, Jesus is discussing with the Jews His identification as God. He boldly states, "...for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins." There can be no other way to understand these claims. Either Jesus was delusional and crazy, or He spoke the truth. We unequivocally state He is God. Jesus possesses the same Divine characteristics as does the Father. In Jesus "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (**Col. 2:9**).

The Watchtower Witnesses flatly deny any Deity to Jesus. They admit that He was in heaven in some pre-human existence but their theology has Him as a created being, citing **Col. 1:15**, "He is...the firstborn over all creation." Obviously, "firstborn" does not refer to being created, but rather to a pre-eminent status. The word for "firstborn" occurs 7 times in New Testament passages discussing Jesus. Only once is it used literally (**Lk. 2:7**). The other 6 times (**Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15,18; Heb. 1:6; 12:23; Rev. 1:5**) it is used figuratively to depict Christ's Divine status & privilege as Lord.

5. Jesus received "worship" (*proskuneo*) on at least 9 different occasions (**Mt. 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 28:9,17; Mk. 5:6; Lk. 24:52; Jn. 9:38**). Yet, He never rebuked those who worshiped Him. What does that tell us?
6. With respect to such worship, if He was a "good man," what should He have done? What did "good men" do? (**cp. Acts 10:25-26** (same Greek word); **14:11-15** (different Greek word but same concept)) What did angels do? (**Rev. 19:10** (same Greek word))
7. What is the familiar teaching found in **Psa. 90:2**? How does **Mic. 5:2** verify Jesus as possessing such qualities?

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The Muslims only go as far as ascribing to Jesus “great prophet” status. But, according to Islam, He is not God’s “greatest prophet.” That distinction belongs to Muhammad, author of the *Quran*. To Muslims, Jesus is no higher than any of God’s other prophets. “Muslims believe in the prophets and messengers of God, starting with Adam, including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon them). But God’s final message to man, a reconfirmation of the eternal message, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last prophet sent by God,…” [Islamic website “A Brief Illustrated Guide To Understanding Islam” – [www.islam-guide.com](http://www.islam-guide.com)] Therefore, Muslims elevate the teachings of Muhammad in the Quran above the teachings of Jesus found in the Bible.

8. What did some Jews in Jesus’ day recognize about Him? (**Jn. 7:40**) What had God already said about His “Prophet” in **Deut. 18:18-19**? How do we know this refers to Jesus?

The Mormons are the most subtle of those who deny Jesus His complete Deity. Notice the following: “Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was the Creator, He is our Savior, and He will be our Judge. Under the direction of our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ created the earth (Jn. 1:10; Heb. 1:2) When Jesus lived on the earth, He led a perfect life. He taught by word and example how people should live in love of God and others. Through His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and by giving His life on the cross, Jesus Christ saves us from our sins (1 Pet. 2:21) as we follow Him. Because of the Atonement, you can be forgiven of sin when you sincerely repent (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 26:30). Through His resurrection, Jesus Christ saved us from death. Because He overcame death, we will all be given the gift of resurrection (Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:22). When life on this earth is over, Jesus Christ will be the final Judge (Acts 17:31; Jn. 5:21-22; Acts 10:42)” [Mormon website “Who Is Jesus Christ?” – [www.mormon.org](http://www.mormon.org)]

But also notice one glaring absence...they do not plainly state Jesus is God. They say He is worthy of worship and praise, but they never call Him “God.” By emphasizing the “latter” revelation to Joseph Smith (the Book of Mormon) over the Bible, they destroy all of Jesus’ credibility that what He taught and revealed to His chosen apostles is sufficient for us today in serving God and getting to heaven.

9. After having just said He was God (**Jn. 8:24**), what did Jesus say about His words? (**Jn. 8:31-32, 40, 51**) What would He later promise to His chosen disciples? (**Jn. 16:12-15**) How do such statements refute the claims of Mormonism?

The “Oneness Pentecostals” blur any lines of distinction between the 3 Divine Members of the Godhead. They teach there exists only 1 God in the universe. They affirm the Deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but they deny the existence of the Trinity. They teach that God revealed Himself as **Father** in the Old

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Testament, as **Son** in Jesus' ministry on earth, and as now as **Spirit** after Christ's ascension. Jesus is God the Father and Jesus is the Holy Spirit. In fact, they teach the name of God is "Jesus."

10. Notice the progression of Who sent Whom in **Jn. 16:5, 7**. What implied truth contradicts the "oneness" theology that Father, Son, and Spirit are all the same Person?

#### God the Holy Spirit

If anyone has misconceptions about the Holy Spirit, it is usually in denying Him His Divine Personality. Many religions have views about the Holy Spirit that are tantamount to blasphemy. They cheapen Him by referring to Him in numerous non-Personal ways. For example, the Watchtower Witnesses claim the Holy Spirit is "a controlled force that Jehovah God uses to accomplish a variety of his purposes. To a certain extent, it can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations" [*"Should You Believe In The Trinity?"*, Watchtower Bible & Tract Society Publication; p. 20].

The Scripture could not be any clearer as to the Personage and Deity of the Holy Spirit. He is not like electricity or fog. He is not a "glorified it." Such views depersonalize Him.

He is a Person, just like the Father and the Son:

- He has a mind (**Rom. 8:27**)
- He has knowledge (**1 Cor. 2:11**)
- He has affection (**Rom. 15:30**)
- He has will, resolve, determination (**1 Cor. 12:11**)

**ALL INDICATIVE OF ONE  
HAVING A PERSONALITY**

He acts like a Person:

- He speaks (**1 Tim. 4:1**)
- He testifies, bears witness (**Jn. 15:26**)
- He makes intercession (**Rom. 8:26**)
- He searches (**1 Cor. 2:10**)
- He leads, forbids (**Acts 16:6-7**)
- He teaches the human mind (**Jn. 14:26**)

**ALL INDICATIVE OF ONE  
HAVING A PERSONALITY**

He can be adversely affected:

- He can be grieved (**Eph. 4:30; Isa. 63:10**)
- He can be despised (**Heb. 10:29**)
- He can be blasphemed (**Mt. 12:31-32**)

**ALL INDICATIVE OF ONE  
HAVING A PERSONALITY**

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11. How does **Acts 5:1-9** powerfully and accurately portray the Holy Spirit as God?

12. What are main roles of God the Spirit? (**Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:6-13; Rom. 8:26-27**)  
*[also reference p. 14, question #1]*