

Why I Believe



Why I Believe In God, The Bible, Jesus, etc.

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To God Be The Glory!

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Why I Believe

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Why I Believe In God

INTRODUCTION

1. I am happy to profess that I believe in God...
 - a. Such faith is a source of great comfort - cf. **2 Co 1:3-4**
 - b. And according to the Bible, necessary to pleasing God - cf. **He 11:6**
2. Why do I believe in God...?
 - a. I cannot see Him, I've never heard His voice
 - b. Yet I believe it is more reasonable to believe in God than not to

[What reasons are there for believing in God? While not exhaustive, there are several reasons, the first commonly referred to as the **teleological** argument for God...]

I. THE EVIDENCE OF DESIGN IN THE UNIVERSE

A. EXPLANATION...

1. Orderly movement of heavenly bodies, making space travel possible
2. Animal instinct, such as the migration patterns of birds, eels, and salmon
3. The human body itself, e.g., the eye

B. IMPLICATION...

1. Design suggests a “designer”
2. Design suggests a Being with intelligence possessing purpose; for example:
 - a. A watch shows design, and implies a watchmaker
 - b. To credit such intricate and precise workmanship to blind chance is unreasonable
3. Contemplating on the universe and the human body rightfully produces awe, and points man to his Creator - cf. **Psa 19:1-2; 139:14; Ro 1:19-20**

[Another reason to believe in God is called the **moral** or **anthropological** argument for God, or...]

II. THE UNIVERSAL SENSE OF OUGHT

A. EXPLANATION...

1. Everywhere people have a **sense of ought**
2. That in certain circumstances, certain things should be done
3. People are concerned...
 - a. That people should act a certain way
 - b. That people do not often act the way they should
4. Even atheists and agnostics have a **sense of justice**, and are angered when it is violated (as in the case of rape and murder)

B. IMPLICATION...

1. This moral nature in man suggests a Moral Being as the Original Cause
2. If there is no God, there is no right or wrong, good or evil

3. If there is no God, no atheist can object on moral grounds if I want to kill them

[A similar reason to believe in God is called the **general** argument...]

III. THE UNIVERSAL RELIGIOUS INSTINCT AND BELIEF IN GOD

A. EXPLANATION...

1. “Men in all the world, and throughout all time, not only believe in deity, but also engage in acts of worship and devotion.” - **Ferrell Jenkins**, Introduction To Christian Evidences
2. “The religious principle is extremely potent in all nations, dominating their thought and history.” - **ibid.**
3. “Everywhere the human heart has a craving for God. There will be exceptions as individuals, but the exceptions do not invalidate the rule. The atheist is an exception in every society!” - **ibid.**

B. IMPLICATION...

1. For every deepest longing of man, there is something that satisfies it
 - a. E.g., food satisfies man’s hunger
 - b. E.g., water satisfies man’s thirst
2. There must be a reality (i.e., God) that complements and meets the universal craving for a Supreme Being
3. Paul says this longing for God was placed in man by God Himself - cf. **Ac 17:26-27**

[Then there is the **cosmological** argument for believing in God...]

IV. THAT EVERY EFFECT MUST HAVE A CAUSE

A. EXPLANATION...

1. This is also called **the argument from first cause**
2. It is based upon the premise that every effect must have a cause

B. IMPLICATION...

1. The cosmos (universe) is an effect that must have an adequate cause
2. The Bible reveals that adequate cause: “In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth.” - **Gen 1:1**
3. A common objection is often raised: “Who created God?”
 - a. The law which states every effect has a cause applies to things that are “physical”
 - b. God by definition is not physical, and therefore not bound by laws which we may discern to apply to physical things
 - 1) God is a spiritual being - cf. **Jn 4:24**
 - 2) His omnipresence is an example of how He defies laws of nature - cf. **Jer 23:23-24**
 - c. So the argument does not apply to Him; He is the **Uncaused Cause** of all things!

[There is also the **esthetical** argument for believing in God...]

V. THE PRESENCE OF BEAUTY AND SUBLIMITY

A. EXPLANATION...

1. This argument is based upon the presence of beauty and sublimity in the universe

2. It observes that you have both...
 - a. **The presence of beauty** in nature itself, and in art produced by man
 - b. **The response of man** to such beauty (appreciation and awe)

B. IMPLICATION...

1. How did this “beauty”, and the “ability to appreciate” it, develop?
2. Were both the result of blind chance?
3. Or did it come from a Supreme Being, who is:
 - a. **Intelligent** (an argument from design)
 - b. **Moral** (an argument from our sense of ought)
 - c. **Artistic** (an argument from beauty and our sense of it) - cf. **Psa 96:4-6**

CONCLUSION

1. These arguments are **philosophical arguments**, but they are based upon what the Bible itself says can be learned about God from nature - **Psa 19:1-2; Ro 1:20**
2. Other arguments can be offered to support the existence of God...
 - a. Fulfilled prophecies in the Scriptures
 - b. Scientific foreknowledge of the Scriptures
 - c. Uniformity of the Scriptures
 - d. Evidences for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead

-- **We shall examine these when we talk about believing in the Bible, Jesus, etc.**
3. **Do you believe in God?** Consider these thoughts by **Gary Henry**...
 - a. Faith in God is a choice that we make between two alternatives. The river of evidence for God’s reality runs strong and deep, but its current is not irresistible. Many people do swim against it, at least for awhile.
 - b. Choosing to believe that God exists is a voluntary act of trust. We believe not because we think the reality of God is absolutely unequivocal, but because we judge the evidence to be greatly in its favor. After careful thought, faith puts its trust and confidence in a premise that is seen to be supported by the weight of the evidence. Faced with the ultimate fork in the road, faith understands that a decision must be made, and it responsibly chooses one alternative.
 - c. But the decision to believe isn’t merely the adoption of an intellectual position. It’s the courageous taking of a stand. Like all ideas, the idea of God has consequences, and faith dares to accept those consequences. It says: “I have considered the matter and am prepared to make my choice. What I have seen has taught me to trust this thing which I can’t see, the reality of God. I not only believe, I am prepared to follow my faith wherever it leads.”

-- **Diligently Seeking God**
3. **Are you willing to make the decision to believe in God?** Again, from **Gary Henry**...
 - a. The time is coming, however, when the reality of God will no longer be a matter of faith.
 - b. It will be an overwhelming fact, impossible to deny and terrifying in its implications for those who have tried to deny it.
 - c. “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” - **Ro 14:11**

-- **ibid.**

Only a fool would suppress the evidence for the existence of God that is out there...

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,” - Ro 1:20

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” - Psa 14:1

Why I Believe In The Bible

INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible is a wonderful book, highly esteemed by many...
 - a. “The Bible is endorsed by the ages. Our civilization is built upon its words. In no other book is there such a collection of inspired wisdom, reality, and hope.” - **Dwight Eisenhower**
 - b. “The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world.” - **Charles Dickens**
2. I am not ashamed to confess my own faith in the Bible...
 - a. As the Word of God
 - b. Written by men, who were inspired by the Spirit of God - cf. **2 Ti 3:16-17**

[What evidences are there to believe that the Bible is inspired of God? There are many, but let's just review a few beginning with...]

I. THE UNIFORMITY OF THE BIBLE

A. THE BIBLE IS A COLLECTION OF 66 BOOKS...

1. Written over:
 - a. A period of **1600 years**
 - b. A span of **40 generations**
2. Written by approx. **40 authors** from every walk of life; e.g.:
 - a. **Moses**, a political leader trained in the universities of Egypt
 - b. **Peter**, a fisherman
 - c. **Amos**, a herdsman
 - d. **Joshua**, a military general
 - e. **Nehemiah**, a cup bearer to a king
 - f. **Daniel**, a prime minister
 - g. **Luke**, a physician
 - h. **Solomon**, a king
 - i. **Matthew**, a tax collector
 - j. **Paul**, a tentmaker and rabbi
3. Written in different places
 - a. Moses in the **wilderness**
 - b. Jeremiah in a **dungeon**
 - c. Daniel on a **hillside** and in a **palace**
 - d. Paul inside **prison walls**
 - e. Luke while **traveling**
 - f. John in exile on the **isle of Patmos**
 - g. Others in the rigors of **military campaign**
4. Written at **different times** and during **different moods**
 - a. David in times of **war**, Solomon in times of **peace**
 - b. Some writing from the **heights of joy**, others from the **depths of sorrow and despair**
5. Written on **three continents**, and in three languages

- a. **Asia, Africa, Europe**
- b. **Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek**
6. Which subject matter includes **hundreds of controversial topics**
 - a. The origin of man & the universe
 - b. The nature of God
 - c. The nature of sin & man's redemption

B. YET THERE IS HARMONY AND CONTINUITY...

1. "The Paradise Lost of Genesis becomes the Paradise Regained of Revelation. Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation."
- **Geisler and Nix**
2. Compare the continuity of the Bible with any other such writings of man
 - a. Imagine what you would have if you just took ten authors...
 - 1) From one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood one continent, one language
 2. Speaking on one controversial subject
 - b. You would have a conglomeration of ideas, not harmony!
3. The **reason** for the **unity** of the Bible?
 - a. The writers were all inspired by the same God - cf. **2 Pe 1:20-21**
 - b. Providing evidence that the Bible is the Word of God!

[Another evidence for the inspiration of the Bible is...]

II. THE SCIENTIFIC FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE

A. THE NATURE OF THIS ARGUMENT...

1. In the Bible there are scientific truths that...
 - a. Were unknown by man with all his wisdom and resources
 - b. Are stated as facts hundreds of years before their discovery by men
2. The writers of the Bible could have known these facts only through inspiration of God

B. A FEW EXAMPLES...

1. The roundness of the earth - **Isa 40:22**
2. The suspension of the earth in space - **Job 26:7**
3. The currents in the seas - **Psa 8:8**
4. The springs in the seas - **Job 38:16**
5. All nations of one blood - **Ac 17:26**

[These are just a few of the many examples of scientific facts written in the Bible, but confirmed only recently with the aid of modern science. Further evidence of inspiration is...]

III. THE FULFILLED PROPHECIES IN THE BIBLE

A. THE NATURE OF THIS ARGUMENT...

1. Prophecies in the Old Testament foretold events in detail that were beyond the scope of human speculation
2. How did the writers do it?
 - a. They attributed it to God!
 - b. And God declared that such evidence was a proof of His existence and superiority over

men and all heathen gods - **Isa 41:21-24; 42:8-9; 46:8-11**

B. A FEW EXAMPLES...

1. The fall of Babylon, written two hundred years before it occurred - **Isa 13:17-22**
 2. The fall of Egypt, that it would be destroyed more by civil war than by outside forces - **Isa 19:1-4**
 3. The fall of Nineveh, with its utter desolation - **Zep 2:13-15**
 4. The fall of Tyre, with its becoming a place for the spreading of nets - **Ezek 26:1-5**
- **Cf. Introduction To Christian Evidences, Ferrell Jenkins, pp. 87-107**

[There are many other examples of fulfilled prophecies, especially those related to the coming of the Messiah (which we will cover in our next study). But here is one more reason to believe the Bible...]

IV. THE IMPACT OF THE BIBLE

A. ON CIVILIZATION...

1. The Bible has had a great impact
 - a. On art, music, and literature
 - b. On education, judicial systems, and even science
2. Some related quotes
 - a. “We cannot read the history of our rise and development as a nation, without reckoning with the place the Bible has occupied in shaping the advances of the Republic.”
- **Franklin Roosevelt**
 - b. “The fundamental basis of this nation’s laws was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings we get from Exodus and Saint Matthew, from Isaiah and Saint Paul.” - **Harry Truman**
 - c. “If you take out of your statutes, your constitution, your family life all that is taken from the Sacred Book, what would there be left to bind society together?” - **Benjamin Harrison**

B. ON INDIVIDUAL LIVES...

1. It has transformed the lives of millions of people
 - a. It has motivated them to be missionaries and martyrs
 - b. It has made them better spouses, parents, friends, neighbors, workers
 - c. Countless people would agree with the words of David - cf. **Psa 19:7-11**
2. Some related quotes:
 - a. “So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year.” - **John Quincy Adams**
 - b. “In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.” - **Robert E. Lee**
 - c. “If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.” - **Daniel Webster**

CONCLUSION

1. The evidence for the Bible as the Word of God is both **objective** and **subjective**...
 - a. The objective evidence includes its unity, foreknowledge, and fulfilled prophecies
 - b. The subjective evidence is seen in its impact on our lives and the world in which we live

2. Do we really believe in and appreciate the Bible as the word of God...?
 - a. "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book." - **Abraham Lincoln**
 - b. "Within the covers of this one single book, the Bible, are all the answers to all the problems we face today. If only we would read it and believe." - **Ronald Reagan**

May our estimation of the Bible prove to be no less, demonstrated by our obedience to it...!

Why I Believe

In Jesus Christ

INTRODUCTION

1. The greatest story ever told is that of Jesus Christ...
 - a. The Son of God becoming flesh, dwelling among men
 - b. His life, His miracles, His teachings, His death, His resurrection and ascension to heaven
 - c. How He shed His blood to provide atonement for the sins of the world!
2. It is a story that calls for faith...
 - a. For those willing to believe, eternal life is possible - **Jn 3:16**
 - b. For those choosing not to believe, there is condemnation - **Jn 3:18**

[Why do I believe in Jesus Christ? For two reasons mainly, both of which were stressed in the preaching of the apostles of Christ. The first being...]

I. FULFILLED PROPHECY

A. EXPLANATION...

1. The apostles appealed to Messianic prophecies to produce faith in Jesus
 - a. Peter in his second sermon at Jerusalem - **Ac 3:18**
 - b. Paul in Thessalonica, as was his custom - **Ac 17:1-3**
2. Some examples of Messianic prophecies
 - a. The conflict between the serpent and the seed of woman - **Gen 3:15**
 - b. The blessing upon all nations through the seed of Abraham - **Gen 12:3; 22:18**
 - c. The prophet to come who would be like Moses - **Deu 18:15,17-19**
 - d. Who would be born of a virgin - **Isa 7:14**
 - e. The forerunner who would prepare the way of the Lord - **Isa 40:3**
 - f. The suffering Servant who would bear our iniquities - **Isa 53:4-12**
 - g. His resurrection from the dead - **Psa 16:8-11**
 - h. His ascension into heaven - **Dan 7:13-14**

B. SIGNIFICANCE...

1. They help to identify the One who is truly the Messiah, God's "Anointed One"
 - a. The Old Testament has approximately **330 prophecies** concerning the Messiah
 - b. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled every one!
2. The mathematical probability of it being a coincidence is astounding!
 - a. The probability of any man who has lived fulfilling just **eight** prophecies has been calculated as **1 in 10^{17}** (100,000,000,000,000,000)! - **Peter Stoner**
 - b. To illustrate how large the number **10^{17}** is, Stoner gave this illustration : Suppose that we take **10^{17}** silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any

one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom. - **ibid.**

- c. The probability of fulfilling just **48** prophecies is one in **10¹⁵⁷**! - **ibid.**
 - 1) Counting at the rate of **250 units per minute**...
 - 2) ...it would take **19 million x 19 million x 19 millions years** to count to **10¹⁵⁷**!

[Jesus fulfilled not **8**, not **48**, but **over 300 prophecies!** It is easy to see why the apostles appealed to Messianic prophecies to prove that Jesus was the Christ. But they also appealed to their own...]

II. APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY

A. EXPLANATION...

1. The apostles claimed to be eyewitnesses
 - a. As professed by Peter - **Ac 10:39-42; 2 Pe 1:16-18**
 - b. As professed by John - **1 Jn 1:1-3**
2. The apostles by their testimony force us to make a decision
 - a. Were they truly eyewitnesses, or false witnesses? - **1 Co 15:14-15**
 - b. Was their testimony based on truth, or cunningly devised fables? - **2 Pe 1:16-18**
3. We cannot say they were sincerely deceived or mistaken
 - a. Especially in reference to the resurrection of Jesus
 - 1) They claim they ate and drank with Him afterwards - **Ac 10:39-41**
 - 2) They claim they saw and touched Him - **1 Jn 1:1-3**
 - b. They leave no room for saying they were mistaken or deceived
 - 1) Some skeptics have tried to offer this as an alternative
 - 2) That perhaps in their grief and loss over the crucifixion they hallucinated or saw grief-inspired visions
 - 3) But hallucinations and visions are highly individualistic experiences
 - 4) The resurrection appearances of Jesus were often witnessed by many at the same time (over 500 on one occasion) - cf. **1 Co 15:4-8**

B. SIGNIFICANCE...

1. If the apostolic testimony is **false**
 - a. The New Testament is a carefully orchestrated lie!
 - b. The apostles suffered extreme hardship for what they knew was a lie! - cf. **1 Co 4:9-13**
 - c. Those martyred (all but one) knew they were dying for a lie!
 - d. They went against everything Jesus and they themselves taught! - cf. **1 Pe 2:1**
 - e. The greatest book ever written (as per Charles Dickens) with its high standards and lofty goals was composed by liars, frauds and deceivers!
2. But if the apostolic testimony is **true**
 - a. Then Jesus is everything they taught He claimed to be!
 - 1) He is the Son of God - **Ro 1:4**
 - 2) He truly has all authority in heaven and earth - **Mt 28:18; Ac 2:36**
 - b. Then everything they testified concerning what He taught is true!
 - 1) He was from the Father above, and spoke the words of the Father - **Jn 8:28-29**
 - 2) No one can come to the Father but through Him - **Jn 14:6**
 - 3) His blood was shed for the remission of sins - **Mt 26:28**
 - 4) He came to offer abundant life - **Jn 10:10**
 - 5) He went to prepare a place for us - **Jn 14:2**
 - 6) He shall come again - **Jn 14:3**

- 7) There will be a resurrection of the dead and ensuing judgment - **Jn 5:28-29; 12:48**

CONCLUSION

1. We have good reason to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...
 - a. **The testimony of Scripture**, in the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies
 - b. **The testimony of eyewitnesses**, in the credible account of the apostles

2. For those willing to obey Jesus, there is yet **another reason** to believe...
 - a. In keeping His word, they will come to know He has spoken from God - cf. **Jn 7:16-17**
 - b. “He shall have evidence, in the very attempt to do the will of God, of the truth of the doctrine.”
- **Barnes**
 - c. “He who in his heart says, ‘Thy will be done, give me light and I will walk in it,’ will find that Christ is just the teacher demanded by his soul, and that the gospel meets his soul’s want. Jesus will so meet the wants of his soul that he will be satisfied and will know the doctrine, that it comes from him who made the soul.” - **B. W. Johnson**

Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ, not only because of **the Messianic prophecies** He fulfilled and **the eyewitness testimony** of His apostles, but because **I have tried Him and not found Him wanting...!**

Why I Believe

In The Church

INTRODUCTION

1. It is not uncommon today to hear people disparage the church...
 - a. I have heard people say in effect, **“Christ, yes; the church, no”**
 - b. Professing they love Jesus, desiring even to follow Him, they have little use for “the church”
2. In previous lessons in this series, I have offered some reasons **“Why I Believe...”**
 - a. In God
 - b. In the Bible
 - c. In Jesus Christ

[Now I would like to explain why I believe **in the church** mentioned by Jesus in **Mt 16:18** when He said “I will build My church”. Let’s first note what is said about the church in the Scriptures...]

I. THE CHURCH DESCRIBED

A. IN THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS...

1. **Christ is “head over all things to the church” - Ep 1:22**
 - a. That Christ is head over all things is clear enough, but what is meant by the phrase **“to the church”**?
 - b. Perhaps that Christ exercises His authority over all things “in the interest” of the church (**Hendriksen**); i.e., the rule of Christ is for the benefit of His church!
 - c. Does this not say something about the Lord’s estimation of His church?
2. **The church “is His body” - Ep 1:23**
 - a. The body of Christ!
 - b. It is His spiritual body, of which He is the head!
3. **The church is “the fullness of Him who fills all in all” - Ep 1:23**
 - a. Christ fills all in all; what fills Him?
 - b. The church constitutes His fullness!
 - c. If one is to be in Christ, by implication he or she must be in the church!
4. **The church is part of God’s “eternal purpose” - Ep 3:10-11**
 - a. The manifold wisdom of God is made known through the church
 - b. In keeping with God’s eternal purpose; i.e., His plan which He had from eternity!
5. **To God be “glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages” - Ep 3:21**
 - a. Certainly God is worthy of all glory
 - b. In the church and by Jesus Christ, God will be glorified forever!
6. **“Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” - Ep 5:23**
 - a. His authority over the church is again emphasized; also that it is His body
 - b. But here we note that Christ is the Savior, not of all men, but of His body, the church!
 - c. Again the implication is clear; to be saved, we must be in His body, the church!
7. **Christ “loved the church and gave Himself for it” - Ep 5:25**
 - a. Jesus loves His church, even as husband is to love his wife
 - b. His death on the cross had His church in view; He was dying for the church!
8. **Jesus’ design is to present it as “a glorious church” - Ep 5:26-27**

- a. He seeks to “sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”
 - b. He desires for it to not have spot or wrinkle, but to “be holy and without blemish”!
9. **Jesus nourishes and cherishes the church - Ep 5:29-30**
- a. Even as you care for your own body
 - b. So Jesus has the same concern for His body, the church!
 - c. All because “we are members of His body”!

B. ELSEWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT...

- 1. The church was purchased with the blood of Christ - **Ac 20:28**
- 2. The church is His body - **Co 1:18,24**
- 3. The church is the family of God, the pillar and ground of the truth - **1 Ti 3:15**

[In view of the Scriptures’ high estimation of the church, it is something in which we should strongly believe. But exactly what is this “church”? The word translated “church” in our Bible is **ekklesia**...]

II. THE CHURCH DEFINED

A. THE MEANING OF “EKKLESIA”...

- 1. Many note that this word is a combination of two words: **ek** (out of) and **kaleo** (to call)
 - a. Concluding that the primary idea is that of being “called out”
 - b. That Christians were called the “ekklesia” because they were “called out”
 - 1) It is true that Christians have been called out - cf. **1 Pe 2:9**
 - 2) But “ekklesia” does not stress the “called out” nature of the church!
 - c. This is a common mistake of defining a word by its etymology rather than by its actual usage in its historical context
- 2. The word “church” as defined by **Easton’s Bible Dictionary**:
 - a. “In the New Testament it is the translation of the Greek word ‘ecclesia’, which is synonymous with the Hebrew ‘kahal’ of the Old Testament...”
 - b. “...both words meaning simply an assembly.”
- 3. Notice **Thayer’s** definition: “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly”
 - a. “an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating” - cf. **Ac 19:39**
 - b. “the assembly of the Israelites” - cf. **Ac 7:38**
 - c. “any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously” - cf. **Ac 19:40-41**
- 4. The word “ekklesia” therefore emphasizes the “assembled” nature of a group; i.e., it simply refers to a gathering, an assembly of people

B. AS USED IN THE CHRISTIAN SENSE...

- 1. **Thayer** offers the following uses of “ekklesia” in a Christian sense:
 - a. “an **assembly** of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting” - cf. **1 Co 14:19,35**
 - b. “a **company** of Christians, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs, according to regulations prescribed for the body for order’s sake” - cf. **1 Th 1:1**
 - c. “those who anywhere, in a city, village, constitute such a **company** and are united into one body” - cf. **1 Co 1:2**
 - d. “the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth” - cf. **Ep 1:22-23**

- e. “the **assembly** of faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven” - cf. **He 12:22-23**
2. Putting it most simply, we can think of the church in two primary senses:
 - a. **The church universal** - the whole assembly of people who are saved, both living and dead
 - b. **The church local** - a company of saved people in a geographical area who work and worship together as a local congregation
 - c. It is the church “universal” of which Jesus spoke in **Mt 16:18**

CONCLUSION

1. The church “universal” is that grand assembly or company of people...
 - a. Of which Christ is the head, and the Savior - **Ep 5:23**
 - b. Which Christ loves, and for which He gave Himself - **Ep 5:25**
 - c. Which Christ gave Himself to sanctify and cleanse - **Ep 5:25-26**
 - d. Which Christ desires to present as a glorious church, without spot or blemish - **Ep 5:27**
2. Do you believe in that church...?
 - a. I hope that you do now, if you didn’t before!
 - b. If you believe in Jesus and in the Bible, then you must!
3. How does one become a member of that wonderful church...?
 - a. Note that the Lord added to the church daily those who being saved - **Ac 2:47**
 - b. Those being added were also those who were being baptized - **Ac 2:41**
 - c. That’s because those being baptized were being saved - cf. **Mk 16:16; Ac 2:38; 22:16**

When a person responds to the gospel of Christ by faith, repentance and baptism, their sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus, and the Lord Himself adds him or her to His church!

Have you been added by the Lord to His church through obedience to the gospel of Christ...?

Why I Believe

In Udenominational Christianity

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study, we talked about the church...
 - a. Of which Jesus spoke in **Mt 16:18**
 - b. That grand company of people made up of those who are saved
 - c. Loved by Christ, and highly esteemed in the Scriptures
2. Most professing Christians would agree with what was described in that study...
 - a. That the church “universal” is the body of Christ, made up of the saved
 - b. That the church “local” refers to saved people in a geographical area who work and worship together as a local congregation
3. Yet many today see no harm in presenting an altered picture of the church to the world...
 - a. A picture in which local churches are divided into various denominations
 - b. Where people are not simply Christians, but Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, etc.

[I am persuaded that such is wrong, and firmly believe in **undenominational Christianity**. What is that, you ask? And why is denominationalism wrong? First allow me to define our terms...]

I. DENOMINATIONALISM DEFINED

A. WHAT IS A DENOMINATION...?

1. “A large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name and organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy.” - **The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**
2. “A religious organization uniting in a single legal and administrative body a number of local congregations.” - **Webster’s Dictionary**
3. Simply put, a denomination is **a group of congregations joined together under some governing body**
 - a. The number of congregations can be as few as two or more
 - b. The governing body might be a synod, presbytery, convention, another church, or even an individual
 - c. Through their tie to a governing body above the local congregation, by definition they are “denominated” from all other congregations that do not submit to the same authority
4. Some examples:
 - a. **The Roman Catholic Church** is a denomination made up of those churches that submit to the pope in Rome
 - b. **The Eastern Orthodox Church** is a denomination made up of those churches that submit to the patriarch of Constantinople
 - c. **The Anglican Church of England** is a denomination made up of those churches that submit to the archbishop of Canterbury
 - d. **The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod)** is made up of those churches that submit to the synod in Missouri
 - e. These are just a few of the thousands of different denominations that now exist!

B. WHAT IS DENOMINATIONALISM...?

1. According to **The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**, it is:
 - a. “The tendency to separate into religious denominations”
 - b. “Advocacy of separation into religious denominations”
 - c. “Strict adherence to a denomination; sectarianism”
2. Again, **Webster’s Dictionary** defines it as:
 - a. “Devotion to denominational principles or interests”
 - b. “Narrow emphasizing of denominational differences: SECTARIANISM”
3. For the purpose in this study, I also apply the term to any **approval** of the denominational division which exists today
 - a. I concede that many people in denominations today are not all that devoted to their denominational principles or interests
 - b. But by membership in a denomination they are by implication **advocating** separation into religious denominations

[Is denominationalism really that bad? Am I suggesting that one cannot serve Jesus faithfully while participating in such religious division? Yes! Here is why I believe denominationalism is wrong...]

II. DENOMINATIONALISM DECRIED

A. IT IS UNSCRIPTURAL...

1. That is, it is without Scriptural support
 - a. There is no basis in the Bible for local churches being divided up into various denominational bodies
 - b. There is no denomination that can go to the Bible and say, “See that passage? There is our church (denomination)!”
2. In the New Testament...
 - a. Local congregations were independent, self-governing
 - b. Church organization was limited to within the local congregation, with elders (also known as pastors, bishops, overseers, presbyters) appointed to oversee only the congregation of which they were members - cf. **Ac 20:17,28; 1 Pe 5:1-2**
3. The only authority above the local church was Christ and His apostles...
 - a. Once the church began, apostles were not replaced after they died
 - b. But through the Word of God, the authority of Christ and His apostles continues
4. Individuals, synods, conferences, etc., that presume to usurp authority over local congregations today do so without Scriptural authority

B. IT IS ANTI-SCRIPTURAL...

1. Not only is it without scriptural support, it is contrary to what the Bible teaches
2. It is contrary to the prayer of Jesus for unity among His believers - **Jn 17:20-23**
3. It is condemned by Paul in his epistle to the church at Corinth
 - a. There are to be no divisions among believers - **1 Co 1:10-13**
 - b. Sectarianism is a sign of carnality - **1 Co 3:3-4**
4. It opposes the efforts of Christ on the cross! - **Ep 2:14-16**
 - a. Jesus died to break down the wall of division
 - b. Jesus died to reconcile man to God in **one** body
 - c. Just as sinning works against the efforts of Christ on the cross (for He also died to put away sin), so it is with denominational division!

C. IT IS HARMFUL TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST...

1. Jesus knew that unity among His disciples would be “the final apologetic” (Shaeffer)
 - a. Cf. “that the world may believe” - **Jn 17:21**
 - b. In view of Jesus’ words, we should not be surprised when unbelievers are slow to accept the gospel coming from a divided church
2. Many point to the divided condition of those professing to follow Christ...
 - a. Atheists and agnostics often use religious division as an excuse not to believe in God
 - b. Non-Christian religions (such as Islam, Judaism, etc.) often use denominationalism as a reason not to believe in Christ
3. Denominationalism has also given support and encouragement to the rise of cults
 - a. Mormonism started in reaction to the denominationalism of Joseph Smith’s day
 - b. “Jehovah’s Witnesses” use religious division to encourage people to follow their strictly-controlled organization (a denomination itself)

D. OTHERS WHO VIEWED DENOMINATIONALISM AS WRONG...

1. **Martin Luther**, the leader of the Reformation Movement:

“I ask that men make no reference to my name, and call themselves not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? My doctrine, I am sure, is not mine, nor have I been crucified for any one. St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 3, would not allow Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, poor, foul carcass that I am, come to have men give to the children of Christ a name derived from my worthless name? No, no, my dear friends; let us abolish all party names, and call ourselves Christians after Him Whose doctrine we have.” - **Hugh Thomason Kerr, A Compend of Luther’s Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943, p. 135)**
2. **John Wesley**, another great reformation leader, among whose followers are Methodists, Wesleyans, etc.:

“Would to God that all party names, and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world, were forgot and that the very name [Methodist] might never be mentioned more, but be buried in eternal oblivion.” - **John Wesley, Universal Knowledge, A Dictionary and Encyclopedia of Arts, Science, History, Biography, Law, Literature, Religions, Nations, Races, Customs, and Institutions, Vol. 9, Edward A. Pace, Editor (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1927, p. 540)**
3. **Charles Spurgeon**, one of the greatest Baptist preachers who ever lived:

“I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living! I hope that the Baptist name will soon perish, but let Christ’s name last forever.” - **Spurgeon Memorial Library, Vol. I., p. 168**

CONCLUSION

1. Again, denominationalism is wrong because it is...
 - a. Unscriptural
 - b. Anti-scriptural
 - c. Harmful to the cause of Christ
2. That is why I and many others profess undenominational Christianity...
 - a. Throwing aside the shackles of denominationalism
 - b. Following Jesus Christ in the freedom of gospel liberty that comes from being simply Christians!
 - c. And what may surprise some, doing so while “being like-minded, having the same love, being of

one accord, of one mind” - cf. **Ph 2:2**

3. How is this possible? It begins with two things...
 - a. A strong desire to follow Jesus Christ and His prayer for unity - cf. **Jn 17:20-23**
 - b. An understanding of the carnal nature of division, and why denominationalism is wrong - cf. **1 Co 3:3-4**

If you believe in Jesus and His church, then simply be a Christian, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and put away any hint of denominationalism. Find or start a local church that is determined to be nothing more than a church of Christ...! - cf. **Ro 16:16**

Why I Believe

In The Gospel Of Christ

INTRODUCTION

1. Among things in which I believe is the gospel of Jesus Christ...
2. The word “gospel” (Gr., **euaggelion**) means “**good news**”...
 - a. It pertains to the good news of salvation through Christ
 - b. It involves the proclamation of God’s grace offered through Jesus

[As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I firmly believe in the gospel. In this study, we will first review why the gospel is so important, and then summarize the particulars of the gospel...]

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GOSPEL

A. SOMETHING JESUS WANTED EVERYONE TO HEAR...

1. Jesus wanted every person in the world to hear the gospel - **Mk 16:15-16**
2. It must therefore be important to Him
- **If so important to Him, it must be important to all who believe in Him!**

B. POWER TO SALVATION FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES...

1. Paul described the gospel as God’s power unto salvation - **Ro 1:16; 1 Co 15:1-2**
2. In the gospel is revealed God’s righteousness - **Ro 1:17**
3. Thus he was not ashamed of the gospel, ready to preach it anywhere - **Ro 1:15; 15:19b**
- **If Paul had such convictions regarding the gospel, shouldn’t we?**

C. CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY...

1. Peter raised the question of what of those who not obey the gospel - **1 Pe 4:17**
2. Paul revealed the answer: vengeance and eternal destruction from God! - **2 Th 1:7-10**
- **If the consequence of not believing the gospel is so grave, how can we not believe?**

[Because of what it means **to Jesus and His apostles**, what it means **to us who believe**, and what it will mean **for those who do not obey**, I believe in the gospel! But what exactly is this “good news”...?]

II. THE PARTICULARS OF THE GOSPEL

A. CONTAINS FACTS TO BELIEVE...

1. Christ was crucified for our sins - **1 Co 15:1-3**; cf. **Isa 53:4-6**
2. Christ was raised from the dead - **1 Co 15:4**; e.g., **Ac 2:32**
3. Christ is exalted as Lord and Savior - **Ac 2:33-36**; cf. **Eph 1:20-23**
4. Christ is coming again, this time to judge the world - **Ac 17:30-31**; cf. **2 Th 1:7-9**
- **Note that destruction comes to those who do not OBEY the gospel; the gospel therefore contains more than simply facts to believe! - 2 Th 1:8**

B. INCLUDES COMMANDS TO OBEY...

1. We must believe the gospel concerning Jesus Christ - **Mk 16:16**; cf. **Ro 1:16**

2. We must confess our faith in Jesus Christ - **Ro 10:9-10**; e.g., **Ac 8:37**
3. We must repent of our sins - **Lk 24:46-47**; cf. **Ac 2:37-38; 3:19; 17:30-31**
4. We must be baptized for the remission of sins - **Mk 16:15-16**; cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
5. We must remain faithful, even to the point of death - **Re 2:10**; cf. **He 3:12-14**
- **For those who obey the gospel, Jesus becomes the author of eternal life! - He 5:9**

C. OFFERS PROMISES TO RECEIVE...

1. The remission of sins, through the blood of Jesus - **Ac 2:38**; cf. **Ep 1:7**
2. The gift of the Holy Spirit, to empower the Christian - **Ac 2:38-39**; cf. **Ro 15:13; Ep 3:16**
3. The gift of everlasting life, to be received at the end - **Jn 3:16**; cf. **Ro 6:22-23**
- **This is why the gospel of Christ is truly “good news”!**

CONCLUSION

1. We have seen that the gospel of Christ is...
 - a. Good news Jesus wanted everyone to hear
 - b. The power of God of salvation to everyone who believes
 - c. Condemnation for those unwilling to obey it
2. We saw where the gospel of Christ contains facts, commands, and promises...
 - a. The **facts to believe** contains the message of God’s love and grace
 - b. The **commands to obey** are not difficult works done to earn salvation, but simple acts of faith whereby we receive God’s grace and mercy
 - c. The **promises to receive** help us deal with the problem of sin in our lives
3. Do you believe in the gospel of Christ...?
 - a. Enough to **obey it** to ensure the salvation of your own soul?
 - b. Enough to **tell others** about it?

May we all have the same attitude as Paul did regarding the gospel of Christ...

“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.”

- Ro 1:16

Why I Believe In Baptism

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study, I shared why I believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ...
 - a. It contains good news that Jesus wanted everyone to hear - **Mk 16:15**
 - b. It is God's power to salvation for everyone who believes it - **Ro 1:16**
2. I also pointed out that the gospel of Jesus Christ contains...
 - a. **Facts to believe** - the message of God's love and grace
 - b. **Commands to obey** - not difficult works done to earn salvation, but simple acts of faith whereby we receive God's grace and mercy
 - c. **Promises to receive** - helping us deal with the problem of sin in our lives
3. Included in the commands of the gospel is one regarding **baptism**...
 - a. An immersion in water by a penitent believer of the gospel
 - b. Which many people say is not necessary

[Yet I believe that baptism is an integral part of the gospel of Christ, and is indeed the culmination of faith in response to the gospel. Why do I believe in baptism? Because...]

I. BAPTISM IS COMMANDED BY CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES

A. BY CHRIST IN THE GREAT COMMISSION...

1. As part of the process of producing disciples - **Mt 28:19-20**
 - a. The apostles were commanded to "make disciples"
 - b. Disciples were made by baptizing them and continuing to teach them
 2. As an integral part of responding to the gospel of Christ - **Mk 16:15-16**
 - a. Jesus wanted His gospel preached to every person in the world
 - b. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved; those who do not believe in the gospel will be condemned
- **Can we fulfill the Great Commission and not tell people the need to be baptized?**

B. BY THOSE SENT BY CHRIST IN THEIR PREACHING...

1. By Peter on the day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:36-38; cf. 2:41**
 - a. When his listeners asked "what shall we do?", Peter told them to be baptized
 - b. 3000 people who gladly received his word were baptized
2. By Philip in preaching Jesus - **Ac 8:5,12,35-38**
 - a. He preached Jesus in Samaria, and people responded in faith and baptism
 - b. He preached Christ to the Ethiopian, who immediately requested baptism
3. By Peter to the household of Cornelius - **Ac 10:47-48**
 - a. The outpouring of the Spirit made it clear that God was no respecter of persons
 - b. Thus Peter commanded baptism for Cornelius and his household
4. By Ananias in his words to Saul of Tarsus (Paul) - **Ac 22:16**
 - a. Saul had been praying and fasting for three days since the Lord appeared to him
 - b. Yet despite faith and repentance, he was still in his sins

- c. Baptism was commanded, to wash away his sins!
- **Can we preach like the apostles, without commanding people to be baptized?**

[Baptism is clearly an **integral part** of preaching the gospel of Christ and thereby fulfilling the Great Commission. To appreciate why, consider what is revealed about baptism in the Scriptures...]

II. BAPTISM IS THE AVENUE OF WONDERFUL BLESSINGS

A. FORGIVENESS OF SINS...

1. Forgiveness of sins is made possible through the blood of Jesus - **Ep 1:7**
 - a. Without the blood of Christ there is no forgiveness of sins
 - b. We cannot earn or merit our salvation in any way
 2. Such forgiveness is promised by those who repent and are baptized - **Ac 2:38; cf. 22:16**
 - a. Yet those who respond in baptism are assured their sins will be forgiven
 - b. In some way, it is at baptism that we receive forgiveness through Jesus' blood
- **Baptism is tightly connected with forgiveness of sins in the Scriptures**

B. THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...

1. There is the promise of the Spirit - **Jn 7:37-39; Ac 2:38-39**
 - a. Promised by Jesus to those who believe
 - b. Promised by Peter to those who repent and are baptized
 2. Baptism involves the working of the Holy Spirit - **1 Co 12:13; Ti 3:5**
 - a. We are made to drink of the Spirit - **1 Co 12:13**
 - b. We experience a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Spirit - **Ti 3:5**
- **Through baptism, we benefit from the Spirit's aid in sanctification**

C. UNION WITH CHRIST...

1. Union with Christ is necessary for spiritual life - **Jn 15:4-5**
 - a. We cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Christ
 - b. Without Christ we can do nothing
 2. In baptism we are united with Christ - **Ro 6:3-4; Ga 3:27**
 - a. Buried with Him through baptism into His death
 - b. We put on Christ in baptism
- **Baptism is the means by which we receive Jesus through faith**

D. NEWNESS OF LIFE...

1. Newness of life is the result of dying to sin and rising with Christ - **Ro 6:3-7**
 - a. We die with Christ in baptism
 - b. As we come forth from the watery grave, we rise to walk in newness of life
 2. In baptism we are buried with Christ, then made alive together with Christ - **Co 2:12-13**
 - a. Buried and raised with Christ, through faith in the working of God
 - b. It is God who makes us alive, having forgiven us all our trespasses
- **Baptism is not a work of man, but a work of God to which we must submit!**

E. SALVATION...

1. Baptism saves us - **1 Pe 3:21**
 - a. Many say baptism **does not** save us
 - b. Peter says baptism **does** save us!
2. How baptism saves us - **1 Pe 3:21; cf. He 9:14**

- a. Not through any cleansing of the flesh, as though the water itself has cleansing power
 - b. But as an appeal for a clear conscience, made possible by the blood of Christ
- **Baptism is the sinner's appeal for forgiveness, to which God graciously answers!**

CONCLUSION

1. Why should we believe in baptism? Because...
 - a. It is commanded by Christ and His apostles
 - b. It is the avenue of wonderful blessings
2. Baptism was integral to the preaching of the gospel...
 - a. "In an apostolic sermon it comes as its logical conclusion." - **George Beasley-Murray**
 - b. "An effort ought to be made to restore this note in our preaching." - **ibid.**

So it was in the first gospel sermon preached after the resurrection of Christ:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." - Ac 2:36-38

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. - Ac 2:41

Have you been baptized (immersed) for the remission of your sins? If not, then heeds the words of Ananias as expressed to Saul of Tarsus:

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." - Ac 22:16

Why I Believe

In The Lord's Supper

INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous study I provided reasons to believe in the ordinance of baptism...
 - a. It is commanded by Christ and His apostles
 - b. It is the avenue of wonderful blessings
2. Another ordinance worthy of our faith is the Lord's Supper, also known as...
 - a. The Communion - **1 Co 10:16**
 - b. The Breaking Of Bread - **Ac 2:42; 20:7**
 - c. The Eucharist, from the Greek **eucharisteo**, "giving of thanks", which Christ did at the time of its institution - **Mt 26:26-27**
3. The Lord's Supper is a simple act, in which those who are Christians...
 - a. Partake of unleavened bread
 - b. Drink of the fruit of the vine
4. I believe in the Lord's Supper for two simple reasons...
 - a. It was instituted by the Lord Himself - cf. **Mt 26:26-28**
 - b. It's observance was commanded by the Lord - cf. **1 Co 11:24-25**

[Such is sufficient for the disciple of Christ. Yet in order to develop a stronger faith in the importance of the Supper, and a greater commitment to keeping its observance, let's first review...]

I. THE MEANING OF THE SUPPER

A. IT IS A MEMORIAL...

1. Note Paul's account as given by the Lord Himself - **1 Co 11:23-25**
 - a. We eat the bread in memory of His body
 - b. We drink the cup (fruit of the vine) in memory of His blood
 2. We therefore commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross - **Mt 26:28**
 - a. Whose death make the new covenant possible - **He 9:16**
 - b. Whose blood was shed for the remission of sins - **Ep 1:7**
- **As the Passover was a memorial commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the blood of the lambs on the door post, so the Supper is a memorial of our Lord's death who makes our deliverance from the bondage of sin possible**

B. IT IS A PROCLAMATION...

1. We proclaim our faith in the efficacy of the Lord's death - **1 Co 11:26a**
 - a. That His death was indeed for our sins
 - b. If we don't believe He died for our sins, why keep the Supper?
 2. We also proclaim our faith in the Lord's return - **1 Co 11:26b**
 - a. For it is to be done "till He comes"
 - b. If we don't believe He is coming, then why keep the Supper?
- **Thus the Lord's Supper looks forward as well as backward, and will ever be**

observed by His disciples who trust in His redemption and anticipate His return!

C. IT IS A COMMUNION...

1. A fellowship or sharing in the blood of Christ - **1 Co 10:16a**
 - a. As we partake, we commune with the blood of Christ
 - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing blessings we enjoy through the blood of Christ - cf. **1 Jn 1:7,9**
 2. A fellowship or sharing in the body of Christ - **1 Co 10:16b-17**
 - a. As we partake, we commune with the body of Christ
 - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing fellowship together in the body of Christ (i.e., the church), as we break bread together
- **The extent to which we share in the body and blood of the Lord as we partake may be uncertain, but dare we neglect whatever may be the benefits of that communion?**

[“**The Lord’s Supper**” therefore has great significance and should be done in faith. We do well therefore to consider what the Scriptures reveal about...]

II. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SUPPER

A. WITH REVERENCE...

1. That is, “in a worthy manner” (NKJV) - **1 Co 11:27,29**
 - a. The KJV says “worthily”, which some have misunderstood
 - b. It is an adverb, describing **how** we take it, not whether we are worthy (none are truly worthy)
 2. With respect for the supreme price Jesus paid for our sins
 - a. E.g., the cruel torture and humiliation of His physical body
 - b. E.g., the spiritual anguish suffered as Jesus bore the punishment for our sins (“My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?”)
 3. Failure to observe with proper reverence brings condemnation - **1 Co 11:27,29**
 - a. One will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord
 - b. One will eat and drink judgment to himself
- **To make light of this memorial puts one in the same category as those who mocked Him as He hung on the cross!**

B. WITH INTROSPECTION...

1. Such as reflecting upon one’s spiritual condition - **1 Co 11:28**
 2. Are we living in a manner that shows appreciation for His sacrifice?
 - a. By accepting the grace of God in our lives? - cf. **2 Co 5:18-6:1**
 - b. By living for Jesus who died for us? - cf. **2 Co 5:14-15; Ga 2:20**
 3. Or are we by willful sinning, guilty of having:
 - a. “trampled the Son of God underfoot”?
 - b. “counted the blood by which [we were] sanctified a common thing”?
 - c. “insulted the Spirit of grace”? - cf. **He 10:26-29**
 4. Do we, by refusing to repent of our sins, “crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an shame”? - cf. **He 6:4-6**
- **In one sense, the Supper is a very private matter between a Christian and his or her God; a time to reflect on the past and to resolve for the future**

C. WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS...

1. There is ample indication the Supper is designed to be a **communal meal**
 - a. The disciples “came together” to break bread - **Ac 20:7**
 - b. When they came together, they were to “wait for one another” - **1 Co 11:33**
 - c. Partaking together of “one bread”, they demonstrate they are “one bread and one body” - **1 Co 10:17**

-- **We commune not just with the Lord, but with one another**
2. For this reason I personally question such practices as:
 - a. Observing the Supper by one’s self when camping or traveling
 - b. Observing the Supper on Sunday night when just one or a couple of people in the congregation are partaking
 - c. Taking the elements to the sick or shut-in who were unable to assemble

-- **While such issues may fall in the realm of opinion, let’s not forget that the Supper builds fellowship with one another as well as with the Lord!**

D. ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK...

1. The Biblical evidence is that it was done on the first day of the week
 - a. Christians came together on the first day of the week to “break bread” - **Ac 20:7**
 - b. Other indications of a weekly observance:
 - 1) The church at Corinth was coming together to eat the Lord’s Supper, though they were abusing it - cf. **1 Co 11:17-22**
 - 2) Instructions concerning the collection suggest their coming together was on the first day of the week - cf. **1 Co 16:1-2**
 - c. Following the divinely approved example of Christians in the Bible, we know God approves of a weekly observance on the first day of the week
2. The earliest historical evidence outside the Bible confirms the day and frequency
 - a. **The Didache** (ca. 95 A.D.) indicates Christians were to come together on the first day of the week to break bread - **Didache 14:1**
 - b. **Justin Martyr** (ca. 150 A.D.) records how Christians assembled on Sunday and partook of the Supper - **Apology I, 67**
 - c. “...the early church writers from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, to Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, all with one consent, declare that the church observed the first day of the week. They are equally agreed that the Lord’s Supper was observed weekly, on the first day of the week.” - **B. W. Johnson, People’s New Testament**
3. Religious scholars confirm this was the practice
 - a. “As we have already remarked, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper was still held to constitute an essential part of divine worship every Sunday, as appears from Justin Martyr (A.D. 150)...” - **Augustus Neander (Lutheran), History Of Christian Religion And Church, Vol. I, p. 332**
 - b. “This ordinance (the Lord’s Supper) seems to have been administered every Lord’s day; and probably no professed Christian absented themselves...” - **Thomas Scott (Presbyterian), Commentary On Acts 20:7**
 - c. “This also is an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians.” - **A. C. Hervey (Episcopalian), Commentary On Acts 20:7**
 - d. “It is well known that the primitive Christians administered the Eucharist (the Lord’s Supper) every Lord’s day.” - **P. Doddridge (Congregationalist), Notes On Acts 20:7**
4. Some believe that a weekly observance diminishes the importance of the Supper
 - a. Which is why they may do it monthly, quarterly, or annually
 - b. But does the frequent practice of:

- 1) **Assembling** diminishing its value and importance?
 - 2) **Singing praises** and **offering prayers** devalue their benefits?
 - 3) **Preaching** and **studying God's Word** decrease their significance to our lives?
- **Our spiritual lives are dependent upon the value and benefits of our Lord's death on the cross; a weekly observance of the memorial helps us to live appreciatively and accordingly!**

CONCLUSION

1. **"The Lord's Supper"** is a very special memorial of His death for our sins...
 - a. Instituted by Jesus Himself, He asked His disciples to do it in His memory
 - b. Jesus told His disciples that He would not eat of the elements again until:
 - 1) "...that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." - **Mt 26:29**
 - 2) "...that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." - **Mk 14:25**
 - 3) "...it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." - **Lk 22:16**
 - 4) "...the kingdom of God shall come." - **Lk 22:18**
 - c. There are two plausible explanations for what Jesus means:
 - 1) Some think it refers to Jesus having fellowship with us as we observe the Lord's Supper in the church, which is His kingdom - cf. **1 Co 10:16-17**
 - 2) Others propose that it refers to the special communion we will have with Jesus in His Father's kingdom, spoken often in terms of a heavenly feast - cf. **Isa 25:6-8; Mt 8:11; 22:2-14; Lk 14:15-24; Re 19:9**
2. The first Christians **"continued steadfastly"** in its observance...
 - a. Just as they did in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship and prayer - **Ac 2:42**
 - b. Coming together on the first day of the week for that very purpose - **Ac 20:7**
3. Christians today should never lose sight of its significance for us...
 - a. A **constant reminder** of the great sacrifice Jesus paid for our sins
 - b. A **communion or sharing** of the body and blood of the Lord
 - c. A **time for self-examination and rededication** of our service to the Lord
 - d. A **means for building fellowship** with one another in the body of Christ

Do we believe in the Lord's Supper today? The frequency and manner of our observance reveals the extent of our faith in this wonderful ordinance...

Why I Believe

In The Virgin Birth

INTRODUCTION

1. In 1998, a Harris poll revealed that **83 percent of Americans** believe in the virgin birth...
 - a. That Jesus was born of the virgin Mary
 - b. Without a human father
2. In 2002, another poll showed that **27 percent of the British Clergy** do not...
 - a. The view of one Hampshire vicar was typical: “There was nothing special about his birth or his childhood - it was his adult life that was extraordinary.”
 - b. He declined to be named, saying: “I have a very traditional bishop and this is one of those topics I do not go public on. I need to keep the job I have got.”

[With the majority of Americans, along with adherents of Islam, **I also believe in the virgin birth of Christ**. Here are some reasons why...]

I. THE VIRGIN BIRTH WAS PROPHESED

A. THROUGH MOSES...

1. In the promise made to the serpent (Satan) - **Gen 3:15**
 - a. The first Messianic prophecy found in Scripture
 - b. “He shall bruise your head; and you shall bruise His heel”
 2. Note that it says “her seed”
 - a. The reference to **the seed of a woman** is unique
 - b. The normal expression is **the seed of man** - e.g., **Ro 1:3**
- **While not overwhelming proof, it is a subtle hint for what was to come!**

B. THROUGH ISAIAH...

1. In the promise made to the House of David - **Isa 7:13-14**
 - a. Though Ahaz rejected a sign, God chose to give one anyway to his descendants
 - b. A virgin (Heb., *almah*) shall conceive and bear a son
 2. Concerning **almah**, which some contend simply means “a young woman”
 - a. “As a matter of fact there is no place among the seven occurrences of ‘almah’ in the Old Testament where the word is clearly used of a woman who was not a virgin.”
- **J. Gresham Machen**, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*
 - b. In the LXX (the Septuagint version of the OT translated around 250 B.C.) **almah** in Isaiah 7:14 is translated by the Greek word **parthenos** which can only mean a virgin
 - c. “The fact that the seventy who were the most eminent Hebrew scholars in the world translated the word ‘virgin’ is sufficient evidence that in this connection the word could have no other meaning.” - **Alfred Edersheim**, *The Life And Times Of Jesus, The Messiah*
- **A young woman bearing a child is not sign; but a virgin bearing a child, whose name was to be called Immanuel (“God with us”)...now that is a sign!**

C. THROUGH JEREMIAH...

1. In the promise made to Judah - **Jer 31:22**
 - a. The Lord would create a new thing in the earth
 - b. “A woman shall encompass a man”
 2. The phrase has been variously interpreted; even so...
 - a. “The fathers saw in these words a prophecy of the miraculous conception of our Lord by the Virgin” - **Barnes**
 - b. Any other explanation would not likely involve God creating a new thing!
- **This prophecy may also be a subtle reference to what was to come!**

[Especially with regards to the prophecy in **Isaiah**, we have a promise that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Unsurprisingly, in the gospel of Jesus Christ we find...]

II. THE VIRGIN BIRTH WAS PROCLAIMED

A. BY MATTHEW...

1. In his account of the birth of Jesus - **Mt 1:18-25**
 - a. Mary was found with child, conceived of the Holy Spirit
 - b. In fulfillment of the prophecy found in the book of Isaiah
 2. Concerning **parthenos**, used by Matthew in his account
 - a. It is the Greek word for “virgin”
 - b. Leaving no doubt that the prophecy in Isaiah referred to a virgin
- **Matthew, an early disciple and one of the 12 apostles, proclaimed the virgin birth!**

B. BY LUKE...

1. In his account of the birth of Jesus - **Lk 1:26-38**
 - a. He also calls Mary a virgin (**parthenos**)
 - b. She was to have a child without the benefit of a man
 2. Note the words of the angel Gabriel
 - a. “For with God nothing is impossible”
 - b. If one believes in God, the concept of a virgin birth is not an impossibility
- **Luke, a physician and notable historian, proclaimed the virgin birth!**

C. BY PAUL...

1. In his epistle to the Galatians - **Ga 4:4**
 - a. Writing of the coming of the Son of God
 - b. Of whom he says was “born of a woman”
 2. Note how careful Paul is in his epistles
 - a. He proclaims Jesus to be the seed of Abraham and David
 - b. He never ascribes the sonship of Jesus to any earthly father, only to God
 - c. Yet he has no hesitation ascribing His birth to a woman!
- **Paul, an apostle of Christ, by implication certainly proclaimed the virgin birth!**

CONCLUSION

1. There is certainly more in the Scriptures that implies the virgin birth of Christ...
 - a. Such expressions as “begotten of God” - e.g., **Jn 1:14,18; 3:16**
 - b. The many references to Jesus as “the Son of God - e.g., **Lk 1:35; Mt 16:16**
2. Skeptics have offered alternative explanations of the conception, such as...

- a. A relationship with a secret lover
 - b. A rape by a Roman soldier
 - c. Sexual relationships with her fiancée, Joseph
 - d. Jesus was conceived as a result of normal relations between Mary and Joseph after marriage
- **Each of these imply that the virgin birth stories in Matthew and Luke were simple fables, invented decades after Jesus' conception, without any grounding in fact**
3. It is important to believe in the virgin birth of Christ; otherwise we claim that...
 - a. The New Testament narratives to be false and unreliable
 - b. We are more knowledgeable than Matthew, Luke, or Paul
 4. Who are you willing to believe...?
 - a. The views of **skeptics and opponents**, who seek to undermine faith in Jesus?
 - b. The opinions of **theologians and professors**, who publish for the sake of tenure and profit?
 - c. The inspired **apostles and writers of the New Testament**, who suffered for their testimony?

I am content to place my faith in Matthew and Luke, and to heed such warnings as this by Paul:

“...Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge -- by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.” - 1 Ti 6:20-21

Committed to our trust is the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin...!

Why I Believe

In The Resurrection Of Jesus

INTRODUCTION

1. I previously discussed why I believe in **the virgin birth of Jesus...**
 - a. How Jesus was born of the virgin Mary
 - b. Without a human father
2. Another essential element of the Christian's faith is **the resurrection of Jesus...**
 - a. That Jesus bodily arose from the dead
 - b. Three days after His crucifixion
3. Why is faith in Jesus' resurrection essential? If Jesus **did not rise** from the dead...
 - a. Our faith is empty, futile - **1 Co 15:14,17**
 - b. We are still in our sins - **1 Co 15:17**
 - c. Those who died in Christ have perished - **1 Co 15:18**
 - d. We are of all men the most pitiable - **1 Co 15:19**

[Why do I believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Because of **eyewitness testimony** that I believe is more rational to accept than to reject! First, there is...]

I. THE NUMBER OF THE WITNESSES

A. WHY NUMBER IS IMPORTANT...

1. The strength or weakness of any testimony is affected by the number of witnesses
2. E.g., the Law of Moses required at least two or three witnesses - **Deu 17:6**
3. Today, the number of witnesses also plays a crucial role in our justice system
-- **The more witnesses you have, the stronger your evidence!**

B. THERE WERE MANY WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION...

1. Paul lists many of these witness in **1 Co 15:3-8**
 - a. Jesus was seen by Cephas (Simon Peter) - cf. **Lk 24:34**
 - b. Jesus was seen by the twelve (apostles) - cf. **Lk 24:36-43; Ac 1:2-3**
 - c. He was seen by five hundred people at one time (probably in Galilee) - cf. **Mt 28:10, 16-17**
 - d. He was seen by James, the Lord's brother
 - e. He was seen by Paul, on the road to Damascus - **Ac 22:6-10**
 2. Other appearances are recorded in the Scriptures
 - a. To Mary Magdalene - **Mk 16:9; Jn 20:14**
 - b. To other women returning from the tomb - **Mt 28:9,10**
 - c. To two disciples on the road to Emmaus - **Lk 24:13-33**
 - d. To the apostles, Thomas absent - **Jn 20:19-24**
 - e. To the apostles, Thomas present - **Jn 20:26-29**
 - f. To seven disciples by the Lake of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) - **Jn 21:1-23**
 - g. To the apostles at the ascension - **Ac 1:3-12**
- **Over a period of forty days, over 500 people saw Jesus after His death!**

[Such witnesses had ample opportunity to determine for themselves if He was really raised from the dead. **How do we know they were not simply gullible, believing what they wanted to believe?** This leads us to consider another factor important to accepting the testimony of witnesses...]

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE WITNESSES

A. SOME HAD NOT BELIEVED IN JESUS...

1. Like His brothers in the flesh - **Jn 7:3-5**
2. They even thought Him crazy - **Mk 3:21**
- **But seeing Him after His resurrection, they became His disciples! - Ac 1:14**

B. SOME WERE SKEPTICAL AFTER JESUS' DEATH...

1. Thomas would not accept the words of others - **Jn 20:24-25**
2. Not until he had empirical evidence would he believe - **Jn 20:26-28**
- **This demonstrates witnesses who were not gullible or easily deceived**

C. ONE WAS EVEN A FORMER ENEMY...

1. Saul of Tarsus, who later became known as Paul the apostle - **Ac 9:1-2**
2. Until he saw Jesus raised from the dead, he believed it to be God's will to oppose Jesus and His followers - cf. **Ac 26:9-11**
- **The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is powerful evidence of the resurrection!**

[These witnesses required overwhelming evidence to convince them that Jesus truly rose from the dead. This leads us now to consider...]

III. THE STRENGTH OF THEIR WITNESS

A. DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR EMPIRICAL TESTIMONY...

1. Their testimony appealed to **empirical evidence**
 - a. I.e., evidence derived from experiment and observation rather than theory
 - b. For forty days they were given infallible proofs - **Ac 1:3**
 - c. They ate and drank with Jesus - **Ac 10:41**
 - d. They saw, heard, and touched Him - **Jn 20:24-28; 1 Jn 1:1-2**
2. They could **not** have been **deceived or deluded**
 - a. If all they had were individual dreams, visions, or hallucinations...perhaps
 - b. But they testified that Jesus appeared to them in groups as well as to individuals
- **The nature of their testimony strengthens their witness**

B. DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR TRANSFORMATION...

1. Prior to the resurrection, Jesus' disciples were **afraid** and **without hope**
 - a. They fled at his arrest - **Mk 14:50**
 - b. Peter cowardly denied Him three times - **Mk 14:66-72**
 - c. The women mourned His crucifixion - **Lk 23:27**
 - d. After His death, the disciples were sad - **Lk 24:13-17**
 - e. After His death, the disciples hid behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews - **Jn 20:19**
2. But after the resurrection, they **fearlessly praised God** and **proclaimed Jesus!**
 - a. Praising God in the temple - **Lk 24:52-53**
 - b. Proclaiming Christ, despite persecution - **Ac 5:28-32,41-42**

3. This transformation in their lives is strong evidence for the resurrection, as admitted by one Orthodox Jewish scholar:
 - a. “If the disciples were totally disappointed and on the verge of desperate flight because of the very real reason of the crucifixion, it took another very real reason in order to transform them from a band of disheartened and dejected Jews into the most self-confident missionary society in world history.” - **Pinchas Lapide**, former Chairman of the Applied Linguistics Department at Israel’s Bar-Illand University (TIME, May 7, 1979)
 - b. He concluded that a bodily resurrection could possibly have been that reason!
- **Their remarkable transformation strengthens their witness**

C. DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR MORAL STANDARDS...

1. They taught others to live holy lives - **1 Th 4:1-7; Ep 4:25**
 2. They lived their own lives in an unimpeachable way - **1 Th 2:3-12**
- **Does this sound like people who propagate lies when they know better?**

D. DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR SACRIFICES...

1. The apostles endured much suffering because of their testimony - **1 Co 4:9-13**
 2. All but one died a martyr’s death because of their testimony
 3. Even Jesus’ brother, James, was thrown off the temple and then clubbed to death for his testimony
- **There was no motive for them to persistently lie about Jesus’ resurrection!**

CONCLUSION

1. The nature of their witness does not allow for the option of being deceived or deluded...
 - a. Again, they professed empirical evidence
 - b. They claimed to eat and drink with Him, touch Him, see Him
2. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, there is only one alternative...
 - a. These witnesses were liars, deceivers
 - b. Even Paul freely admits this is the only alternative - **1 Co 15:14-15**
3. Is it reasonable to believe they purposefully propagated a lie...?
 - a. Too many people attested to the same fact
 - b. They were not the kind of people to fabricate such a falsehood
 - c. They lived noble lives, and were **all** willing to suffer and die for their testimony!

When we carefully examine the lives and testimony of such witnesses, the only reasonable conclusion to draw is that they really saw what they claimed: **Jesus is risen...!**

Why I Believe In The Second Coming

INTRODUCTION

1. Another fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith is **the second coming of Christ...**
 - a. That Jesus will literally one day return
 - b. To usher in a series of events that will transform our existence
2. This “second coming” is not to be confused with other “comings” of the Lord...
 - a. The Scriptures speak of more than one “coming” or “day” of the Lord
 - b. In the OT, God came in judgment against various nations
 - c. Jesus also spoke of more than one “day” - cf. **Lk 17:22**
 - d. One such “day” was His coming in judgment on Jerusalem in 70 A.D., as foretold in His Olivet Discourse - cf. **Mt 24, Mk 13, Lk 21**
3. This “second coming” will be...
 - a. At the “last day”
 - b. At the end of time as we know it
 - c. The beginning of a totally new existence that will last for eternity

[Why do I believe in the second coming of Christ? First, there is...]

I. THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING

A. BY JESUS HIMSELF...

1. At the last supper, before His arrest and crucifixion - **Jn 14:1-3**
2. Comforting His disciples with the promise of His return

B. BY HIS ANGELS...

1. When Jesus ascended into heaven - **Ac 1:9-11**
2. The “two men...in white apparel”
3. Who said, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

C. BY HIS APOSTLES...

1. Peter, in his second recorded sermon - **Ac 3:19-21**
2. Paul, in writing to...
 - a. The Corinthians - **1 Co 11:26; 15:22-23**
 - b. The Thessalonians - **1 Th 1:9-10; 2:19; 3:13**
 - c. The young evangelist, Timothy - **2 Ti 4:1**
3. The writer to the Hebrews - **He 9:27-28**

[As I believe in Jesus and His apostles, I believe in their promises. Besides the promise of His coming, there is also...]

II. THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING

A. TO RAISE THE DEAD...

1. Both the righteous and wicked dead - **Jn 5:28-29**
 - a. Note there is but **one resurrection**, including both good and evil, that will occur at one time (“the hour”)
 - b. As Paul said, “there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” - **Ac 24:15**
2. Those who are alive at the Lord’s coming...
 - a. Will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, clothed with immortality and incorruption - **1 Co 15:50-54**
 - b. Then “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air.” - **1 Th 4:16-18**

B. TO DELIVER THE KINGDOM TO GOD...

1. When all are made alive at His coming - **1 Co 15:22-24**
2. Contrary to the view that Jesus has yet to establish His kingdom on earth, He has been ruling over His kingdom since He first ascended to heaven!
 - a. In fulfillment of the prophecy that God would raise up the Christ to sit on the throne of David, Jesus was raised from the dead and made “Lord” - **Ac 2:30-36**
 - b. All authority has been given unto Him - **Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pe 3:22**
 - c. Christians are said to be “in” His kingdom - **Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
 - d. Christ will continue to reign “till He has put all enemies under His feet” - **1 Co 15:25**
 - 1) Note that His reign will be concurrent with the fact enemies are still present
 - 2) As prophesied by the Psalmist: “Rule in the midst of Your enemies!” - **Psa 110:1-2**
 - e. Thus Christ is **now** “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of Lords” - **1 Ti 6:15; cf. Re 19:16**
 - f. And He will reign “till He has put all enemies under His feet” - **1 Co 15:25**
 - 1) The last enemy that will be destroyed is death itself - **cf. 1 Co 15:26**
 - 2) Which we have seen will be destroyed at the coming of the Lord when He will raise the dead - **1 Co 15:51-54**
3. So when He comes, it will not be to “set up”, but to “deliver up” His kingdom!
 - a. As Paul clearly told the Corinthians - **1 Co 15:23-26**
 - b. As taught by Jesus in His Parable of the Tares - **Mt 13:36-43**
 - 1) His kingdom will last until “the end of this age”
 - 2) After which “the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (i.e., the heavenly kingdom)

C. TO JUDGE THE WORLD AND PUNISH EVIL...

1. God has appointed “a day” in which He will judge the world - **2 Pe 3:7**
 - a. The one appointed to be the Judge is Jesus Christ - **Ac 17:31; 2 Co 5:10**
 - b. The standard by which He will judge will be the words He has spoken - **Jn 12:48**
2. It will be a day of perdition (utter destruction) of ungodly men - **2 Pe 3:7**
 - a. Those who know not God and have not obeyed the gospel will be punished with “everlasting destruction” - **2 Th 1:7-10**
 - b. Those whose names are not in the “Book of Life” will be cast into the “lake of fire” - **Re 20:11-15**

D. TO USHER IN THE “NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH”...

1. As taught by Peter - **2 Pe 3:10-14**
 - a. This will follow the “passing away” of the present heavens and earth

- b. In fulfillment of God's promise - cf. **Isa 65:17-19; 66:22-23**
 - c. Something we are to "look for"
 - d. It will be a realm where righteousness dwells, therefore the need for us to be found "in peace, without spot and blameless" when Christ returns
2. As taught by John - **Re 21:1-22:5**
 - a. It will follow after the first heaven and first earth have "passed away" - cf. **Re 20:11**
 - b. It will be the place where the "New Jerusalem" will abide when it "comes down out of heaven" - cf. **Re 3:10c; 21:10**
 - c. God will dwell with us in this "New Jerusalem" that has "come down out of heaven"

CONCLUSION

1. If there will **not** be a second coming, then there will **not** be...
 - a. A resurrection of the dead
 - b. A transfer of Christ's kingdom to the heavenly kingdom
 - c. A judgment of the world and subsequent punishment of evil
 - d. A new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells
2. If there will not be a second coming, then Christians are to be pitied...
 - a. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen - **1 Co 15:16**
 - b. And if Christ is not risen, our faith is futile and we are still in our sins - **1 Co 15:17**
 - c. Those who have died in Christ have perished - **1 Co 15:18**
 - d. If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most pitiable - **1 Co 15:19**
3. But we can have confidence in the second coming of Christ...
 - a. If we believe there is a God
 - b. If we believe the Bible is the Word of God
 - c. If we believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

That Jesus has not yet come is only an indication of God's long-suffering (**2 Pe 3:8-9**). But rest assured, as promised that "day" will come!

In the meantime, what should be our attitude be toward the coming of our Lord?

- One of **prayerful preparation** - **Lk 21:34-36; 2 Pe 3:14**
- One of **joyful expectation** - **Ph 3:20-21**
- One of **patient endurance** - **He 10:35-39**

Is that your attitude...?