

THE SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST -- God made it clear from creation there had to be the shedding of blood in order for sins to be forgiven (Gen. 3:21; Heb. 9:22). All the Old Testament animal sacrifices were types of the one eternal sacrifice of the lamb of God -- (Jesus Christ) (John 1:29; Heb. 10:1-18). Animal sacrifices could not make the forgiveness of sins possible. It was only through the offering of Christ's body in His death and resurrection that made it possible for God to justly forgive man's sins (Heb. 9:1-28; 10:1-18; Rom. 3:25,26). Christ as the perfectly sinless lamb of God was the just dying for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus Christ died as our substitute. He bore our punishment in his own body (Is. 53:1-12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21). God foreshadowed this in when He provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac (Gen. 22:1-14). The sending away of the scapegoat on the day of atonement with the sins of the people upon it was a type of Christ's substitutionary death for man's sins (Lev. 16:21; 1-34).

JESUS CHRIST IS THE MESSIAH -- Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). Jesus said upon this confession I will build my Church (Matt. 16:18). Peter's message on the day of Pentecost and at Solomon's porch proclaimed Jesus as the Christ (Acts 2:30,31,36; 3:12-18). Even after the Apostles had been beaten, they continued to preach Jesus as the Christ (Acts 4:41,42). The theme of Philip and Paul's preaching was that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 8:5,12; 9:20,22; 17:1-3; 18:5,28; 26:27). This preaching was based on Old Testament prophecies concerning Messiah (Acts 17:2,3). The central core message of the Messiah was His death and resurrection (Acts 26:27; 17:3; 2:23,31). As the Messiah, Jesus Christ fulfills the anointed office of prophet, priest and king (Deut. 18:15,19; Acts 3:22; Psalm 110:4; Heb. 5:5ff; Psalm 2:1-12; Rev. 19:15,16).

THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF CHRIST -- The Gospel message of Jesus' resurrection is not some abstract philosophical concept of newness of life but the literal bodily resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-58; Acts 2:22-36). He bears in His glorified resurrected body the marks of Calvary (John 20:26-29; Luke 24:39). Those who claim to be the Christ can easily be exposed as false religious teachers. Ask to see the nail prints in their hands (Matt. 24:5). After Jesus' resurrection he was seen by more than 500 witnesses (1 Cor. 15:6). He ate with the disciples after his resurrection (Luke 24:43). Jesus Christ's resurrection is the cornerstone of Christian faith proving that He was God manifest in human flesh who died for the sins of the world (Matt. 12:38-41). The gospel that one must believe in order to be saved is the gospel of Jesus death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The genuineness of His resurrection is accompanied by "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3) so that all men are without excuse if they refuse Christ's salvation.

THE BODILY 2ND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST -- The same Jesus who bodily ascended into heaven will return to earth to establish His millennial kingdom (Acts 1:11; Acts 19:11-20:10). His coming will be in power and great glory (Matt. 24:30; Luke 21:27;). His feet in that day of judgment will stand upon the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). He will rule earth and mankind with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9; Rev. 19:15). All men will face His judgment (John 5:22-29; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev.20:11-15).

THE CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH



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THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE NOT THE BUILDING -- Most people think of the Church in terms of a building -- bricks and mortar. If asked, "where do you go to Church?"; they respond with the address of the Church building. But the Bible clearly reveals that the Church is the people not the building. The word Church is the greek word ekklesia. It is a composite of two words "ek" which means out and "kaleo" which means called or summoned. Ekklesia means "called out ones". The Church is made up of people who are called out from the midst of all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of the world to be separated unto God in holy living, conformed to the image of Christ. This is Peter's emphasis in 1 Peter 2:9,10: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God..." Those "called out ones" who are the Church are to be so radically different in their lifestyle that those in the world consider them to be strange, weird, or as Peter says "peculiar". Those who profess faith in Christ and unite themselves to the fellowship of a local Church have a calling to holiness (2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Peter 1:15). The Church is to be in the world, but the world is not to be in the Church (John 17:15). Early Christians were known as followers of "the way" (John 14:6; Acts 19:9,23). Salvation and faith in Christ was more than a "decision" it was a lifestyle. It involved a genuine repentance of sin and a genuine faith in Christ that resulted in holiness of living and good works (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14 3:8; 1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 2:38).

THE CHURCH HAD ITS' BEGINNING AT PENTECOST -- Jesus spoke of the Church as yet a FUTURE ORGANISM in His days upon the earth that He would himself build at a future time (Matt. 16:18). There was no Church in Old Testament times. God's program for the Church and Israel are not the same. All the promises and covenants made to the nation of Israel will be literally fulfilled at Christ's 2nd coming. The Church was a "mystery" hidden in ages past, but revealed in the time of Christ and the apostles (Col. 1:24-29). The Church is the "BODY OF CHRIST" (Col. 1:18,24). Christ spoke of a future day after His death, resurrection and ascension that the "comforter", "the promise of the father", "the Holy Spirit" would come (John 14:16,17; 16:7,13; 7:39; Acts 1:5). This promise of the Father, the coming of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost. Since that time every Christian who believes in Christ's atoning work for His salvation is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the BODY OF CHRIST: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one BODY, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Please note that ALL BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. The moment you receive Christ as your Savior, you receive the Holy Spirit -- "...now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). It is not possible to be a Christian without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19,20). There is no 2nd experience after initially receiving Christ whereby one receives the Holy Spirit. If you have received Christ you have been born again of His Spirit (John 3).

THE MANIFOLD PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH -- Generally speaking the purpose of the Church is to glorify God through His Son Jesus Christ. When I attended Columbia Bible College their theme was "To know Him (Jesus Christ) and to make Him known". When the people of the Church COME TOGETHER each week the PRIMARY PURPOSE of the gathering IS TO KNOW HIM. The primary activities of the Church gathered are EDIFICATION AND WORSHIP. When the people of the Church are OUT IN THE WORLD during the week their PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO MAKE HIM

person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said that He would build His Church based on a specific confession of men: Matthew 16:16 "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16-18). Consequently, the DOCTRINES OF DEMONS mentioned earlier are manifested by denying basic fundamental truths about Christ. Many say it does matter what Church you join because they all believe in the same God. But when the doctrines are examined concerning the person and work of Christ, it is obvious that many Churches are promoting a false gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9; Matt. 24:5; 1 John 4:1). Below are some of the fundamental basic doctrines concerning the person and work of Christ.

THE DEITY OF CHRIST -- Many people admire Jesus Christ as a gifted religious teacher, great miracle worker, mighty prophet of God, or prime example of good morals. But these all fall short of adequately describing Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God. He was God manifest in the flesh (Matt. 1:23; Phil. 2:5-8) Jesus Christ was and is God (John 1:1-3). He claimed to be God (John 14:7-12). His enemies understood His claim to be God (John 10:30-33). His disciples acknowledged His deity (John 20:28). His miracles attested to His deity (John 14:11; 9:32,33; Acts 2:22; Matt. 9:1-8). His bodily resurrection proved His deity (Rom. 1:4). Jesus clearly instructed His followers that those who refuse to give Him the same honor as God the father are not true believers (John 5:23).

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST -- Why was it necessary for God to send His Son into the world to die for the sins of the world? Why couldn't another man die for the sins of the world? The answer is because every person born into this world is born with sin inherent from the moment of conception (Ps. 51:5; 58:3); We sinned in Adam when he sinned and every person thereafter has been born "dead in sins" (Eph. 2:1-3 Rom. 5:12-21). The key factor is that sin is passed through Adam the man, not Eve the woman (1 Tim. 2:14). Every man or woman born into this world having a human father will one day die, because all men are sinners and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23; 3:23). No other person could die for the sins of another person, because we all die because of our own sin (Ezk. 18:4). Because Jesus Christ was born of a virgin without a human father and came into this world as the sinless lamb of God (Matt. 1:23; Heb. 4:15; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21:); He is the only qualified one who could die for the sins of another as their substitute -- the just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 3:26). Belief in His virgin birth is critical to salvation (1 Tim. 5:16).

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST -- Jesus Christ who eternally existed with the Father ("son is given" -Isaiah 9:6) was born into this world as a man ("child is born" Isaiah 9:6). Jesus was fully God and fully man: "Who (Jesus Christ), being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6,7). In His humanity Jesus Christ faced all the same human limitations, pressures and needs that we face. He got hungry (Matt. 4:2; 21:18), He thirsted (John 4:7), He needed sleep (Matt. 8:24), He cried (John 11:35), He experienced physical development and growth (Luke 2:52), He bled (John 19:30ff), He experienced suffering (Heb. 2:10,18; Luke 2:40) etc. Isaiah informs us that Jesus was "...despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3). According to Hebrews 4:15 "...we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

was once a nation founded on Biblical principles is now a nation being governed by humanistic laws. The moral collapse and destruction are evident to all who have eyes to see. How can this be? Where are the Daniels, the Esthers, the Josephs? Each of these and others had a powerful influence on the king and the laws of the land because they knew how to let their light shine in the affairs of the laws of the land. They knew how to advise the king (Dan. 1:17,19,20), they knew how to appeal to the king (Dan. 1:9-16), they knew how to enlighten the king of the plot of evil men (Esther 7:1-6; 8:3-14), they knew how to help the king prepare for future calamity (Gen.41:1-44) so that when other nations struggled, his nation was strong. Where are the Elishas who know how to give wise military advice to the king because of spending time with God in the prayer closet (2 Kings 6:8-17). If we have the light of God within us and we do, then we should be able to enter into the marketplace of human government with the principles of Scripture and appeal to the king with wisdom that will establish justice in the land. The sword in the government's hand today is not being used as a deterrent to evil, because the laws and penal system of our land are not based on Biblical principles. There is a great need for Christian men to realize the potential of influencing our nation for good as they learn to serve the king with wise Biblical counsel and appealing to Him concerning His accountability to God (John 19:10; Dan. 4:1-37). In many cases, godly Christians may not be elected to high positions, because they refuse to compromise their standards and beliefs. But those under authority have greater power than those in authority (1 Pet. 3:1-6), if they know how to appeal and exercise the power of prayer (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH -- The early Church continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). The Church is made up of people who have committed themselves to a certain way of life based on specific beliefs and convictions of doctrine. We are warned that in the "latter times some will depart from the faith (apostles doctrine), and give heed to doctrines of demons" (1st Tim. 4:1). It is very important then to discern true doctrine. Many people are looking for a Church where the preacher tells them what they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear. They want a Church where they can be comfortable but not convicted. Such people are described in the following verse: "For the time will come when they will NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3).

The central theme of the APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE was "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul said you could determine true doctrine by what Jesus taught and by how Jesus lived: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, and to the DOCTRINE WHICH IS ACCORDING TO GODLINESS...FROM SUCH WITHDRAW THYSELF" (1 Tim. 6:3-5). Peter says that false religious teachers will "deny the Lord that bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1) and Jude says they will "deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). John says that you can test the teaching of false teachers by their confession of Christ: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God... {2} Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that JESUS CHRIST IS COME IN THE FLESH is of God: {3} And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God:..." (1 John 4:1-3). It should be clear from these references that the true doctrines of the Church that draw the Church together in a spirit of unity are based on a correct understanding of the

KNOWN. The two primary activities of the Church when it is scattered in the world are EVANGELISM AND PRESERVATION. These are not mutually exclusive principles. In 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 we see an example of unbelievers coming to a conviction of their sins as they are among the gathering of God's saints. In Acts 18:24-28 we see an example of God's saints edifying each other outside of the official gathering of the Church.

THE EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH -- When the Church comes together to KNOW HIM, there are two primary activities mentioned in scripture -- EDIFICATION AND WORSHIP. Edification takes place when members of Christ's body mutually build up each other's faith through the exercising of the spiritual gifts God has given to each member (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10,11). When the Church is gathered, the Pastor is not the only one who is to minister to the congregation; the congregation is to minister to each other (1 Cor. 14:26). Sometime take a concordance and look up the words "one another" in the New Testament. There are many "one another" ministries that should take place when the Church is gathered -- love one another (Rom. 13:8), admonish one another (Rom. 15:14), be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32), serve one another (Gal. 5:13) etc. Hebrews 10:25 is normally quoted to demonstrate that every Christian has a responsibility to attend a local Church. Normally, the last part of the verse is not emphasized. Notice what it says: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). Yes, we are told to make sure we gather with other Christians on a regular basis; but when we gather, notice what we are instructed to do. It doesn't say come and hear a sermon although that is an important part of our gathering. It says "exhort one another"! The members of the body are to minister one to another. Many come to Church to be ministered unto. God wants us to come to Church prepared to minister (Matt. 20:28). Don't come to Church as a spectator, come to Church as a participant. Don't come with the attitude: what can this Church do for me, come with the attitude: how can I contribute to the life and well being of the Church. There is no such thing in Christ's body as an inactive member. The health and maturity of a local Church is not determined solely by the giftedness and ministry of the Pastor, but rather by the ministry of all the members one to another (Eph. 4:11-16). Even in Paul's missionary endeavors you will notice it was not a one man show (2 Thess. 2:1).

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH -- In Ephesians chapter 4:11-16 we see the edification of the Church explained. In Ephesians 5:18-20 we see a glimpse of the worship of the Church: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and MAKING MELODY IN YOUR HEART TO THE LORD; Giving thanks always for all things UNTO GOD AND THE FATHER in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:19,20). We can only effectively edify each other as we collectively magnify the Lord Jesus Christ in our worship: "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Psalm 34:3). When the believers gathered in one accord, in one place, of one mind giving attention in prayerful worship to the King of Kings the Lord Jesus Christ, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14; 2:1ff). As we can see from this passage in Ephesians, those who are filled with the Holy Spirit will offer songs of praise to their God out of hearts of gratitude. The gathering of the Church is not just a time of instruction. Many think the most important part of Church is the sermon. The other parts of the Service are preliminaries to prepare us for the sermon. Rather, every part of the Service should be to

facilitate a means whereby we can worship God and offer unto Him the praise, honor and glory due His Name (Phil. 2:10,11; Rev. 4:11). The singing, the praying, the testifying, the giving, the special music, the ordinances, the greetings etc. should all be with the goal of magnifying our Savior as we gather in His name to worship Him. God promises to manifest Himself in a special way whenever His people are gathered in His name (Matt. 18:20). God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). The Sunday Worship Services should be a time of exaltation and celebration of all that God has been doing in our lives throughout the week. We should: "come before His presence with singing". We should "enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise, be thankful unto Him, and bless His name" (Psalm 100:2,4). The redeemed of the Lord, when gathered with God's people, should come with praise in their mouth to their God. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so..." (Ps. 107:2) Consider the following accounts of the congregation of God's people: "I will give thee thanks in the great CONGREGATION: I will praise thee among much people (Psalm 35:18). My praise shall be of thee in the great CONGREGATION... (Psalm 22:25). I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the CONGREGATION will I praise thee (Psalm 22:22). Let them exalt him also in the CONGREGATION of the people... (Psalm 107:32). Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the CONGREGATION (Psalm 111:1). Praise ye the LORD. THE EVANGELISM OF THE CHURCH -- Somebody once wisely said, "Either you evangelize or you fossilize". A healthy mature Church will have compassion for the lost (Matt. 9:36-38) and as its' members are scattered in the world throughout the week, they will endeavor to persuade the lost both by the witness of their life and the witness of their word to receive the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). The marching orders Christ gave to His Church was to go into all the world proclaiming the gospel that men might be saved (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He didn't wait on the lost to come to Church to get saved. He took the initiative to take His message of salvation to them in the marketplace of their lives. That's one reason why Jesus was accused of being a "friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). Jesus hates sin, but loves the sinner. The Church is to hate sin, but love the sinner. The Church is to be "in the world" but not "of the world" (John 17:14,15). The Christian is to be INSULATED from the sin of the world, but not INSULATED from the sinner of the world. The idea of Christians establishing a commune to remove themselves from contact with the world is not scriptural. We are not to be overcome with the evil of the world around us, but rather we are to overcome the evil with the doing of good (Rom. 12:21). The Church is not to be on the DEFENSIVE but on the OFFENSIVE. Christ promised to build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail (Matt. 16:18). The message of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16) The greek word for power is the word "dunamis". We get the English word dynamite from it. The preaching and witnessing of the cross of Christ can spoil the powers of evil and set the captive free (1 Cor. 1:18; Col. 1:15; Luke 4:18) Jesus proclaimed that they who follow Him would become "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). If you are going to catch fish, you have to go where the fish are located -- to the pond. No one every caught a fish at home in his living room. We are told to go out into the "highways and hedges" and compel the unsaved to come into God's house (Luke 14:23). It is God's design to manifest His love to a lost and dying world through the compassionate ministry of the local Church. Many times God will allow us opportunities to meet the physical needs of people in order that a bridge might be built to ultimately

meet the spiritual needs in their life. The miracles Christ manifested in meeting the physical needs of people were with the goal of meeting the much more important spiritual needs. Consider the example of the ten lepers. All ten were physically healed of their leprosy by Christ. One, a samaritan, returned to Christ in thanksgiving and worship. Jesus said to him "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee well" (Luke 17:19). He was already physically well. What did Christ mean? I believe this samaritan leper received a healing the others did not receive. He received the healing of his soul -- salvation. The Church should be constant in its' prayers for the physical needs of the unsaved. As they know we are praying for that need and they see God meet that need in unexpected ways, many of them will have open hearts to ask us a reason of the hope within us (1 Pet. 3:15). We will have the opportunity to lead them to salvation. This is why we are instructed in 1 Timothy 2:1 to pray for the needs of all men; because God would have all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4).

THE PRESERVATION OF THE CHURCH -- Most of us understand what happens to meat if it is not kept in a refrigerator or preserved by some method like salting. The process of deterioration and decay destroys the meat. What is it in society, what is it in the world, that preserves the world from the destruction of evil. We live in a sin cursed world (Rom. 8:18-25). Unless the evil tendencies of man are restrained, man progressively deteriorates morally until all of his thoughts are continually evil (Gen. 6:5) and society self destructs through the violence in the land (Gen. 6:11,12). In Noah's day when God brought the flood of judgment, it was an act of mercy on His part. Society was crumbling at its' foundations and was on a collision course with self destruction. God in His mercy spared Noah and His family and allowed man to repopulate the earth (Gen. 9:1). At this time, God established a very important principle that would be a deterrent to evil in the future. He established the authority of human government based on the value of human life (Gen. 9:6). He gave man the authority to take the life of any man who deliberately murders another man. This principle of human government (just punishment of evil doer) is further explained in Romans 13:4. There, God explains that He has placed into the hands of civil government a physical sword; whereby, they are to punish those who do evil, even to the extent of capital punishment. We are told in Ecclesiastes 8:11 that if proper punishment is not given promptly to those in society who deserve it that the heart of men will be fully set to do evil. What does all this have to do with the Church? Ultimately, the only way for the Church to conquer the powers of evil that prevail in a nation is by the preaching of the gospel so that men are saved and have a new heart to obey God. Without regeneration of the Holy Spirit and a change of heart within man, all attempts at the preservation of society will fail. Man's problem is not a political or economic problem, but a heart problem. But having made that point clear, I would like to make an observation of what is I think critical for Christians to understand in our day. Having come to faith in Jesus Christ, Having experienced the new birth and received a new heart to obey God, we are to be the salt and light of the earth (Matt. 5:13,14). The only light this world possesses is the light that comes from the Christians who have the indwelling presence of Christ within. We are not to take our light and hide it under a bushel (Matt. 5:15), but rather are to let it shine on a lampstand that all in the house may see (Matt. 5:15). In our day some have been of the opinion that Christians should have nothing to do with civil government. It's the Christian's job to preach the gospel, not get involved in politics. The consequences have been horrendous. As Christians have taken their light out of the high places of leadership in the land, the darkness of humanism has come in like a flood. Our nation that