

Did Jesus Intend us to Obey Literally What He Taught?

The way you answer the question, Do I need to obey literally what Jesus taught? will have a huge effect on how you view the words of Christ as He spoke them in the gospels and how you live every area of your life. Much of what is in this article may seem harsh, absurd and foreign to the 21st century mind. Even in Christ's day His message was shocking, and in some cases, turned people away.

Below is a summary of the 4 different interpretations regarding this question:

Interpretation #1: Jesus teachings are for every nation to follow. They are to be interpreted at face value and obeyed. The pre-Constantine church, Waldensians, and Anabaptists are a few examples of movements that have adhered to this interpretation.

Interpretation #2: Jesus teachings are for every nation to follow but they were spoken in hyperboles and they cannot be taken at face value. Constantine, Augustine, Luther, Zwingli and Calvin are examples of men that held this interpretation.

Interpretation #3: Jesus was offering a kingdom to the Jews and His teachings are designed for that kingdom. The Jews refused His offer therefore His teachings are postponed to a future date when Jesus will come and setup His physical kingdom on earth. His teachings cannot be applied to the Gentile church age, but rather the Gentiles were given the Apostle Paul to guide us. This interpretation was developed in the late 1800's by John Nelson Darby. It has been termed dispensationalism or the postponement theory.

Interpretation #4: Jesus teachings, especially the Sermon on the Mount are an unattainable ideal. It teaches us the standard for righteousness. He spoke them to illustrate that we will never be able to attain to this righteousness, and shows us our need for His blood to cover for our constant failures.

The whole of the early church agreed unanimously that Jesus' teachings, including the Sermon on the Mount, were to be followed as a child would understand them. For example, if Jesus said "love your enemies" and "resist not evil," they would interpret these to mean not to defend oneself or go to war.

Today, most of the professing church does not believe we need to obey the teachings of Christ as a child would understand them.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. Matthew 7:24

The Greek word for "sayings" in the above passage is *logos*. Throughout the New Testament *logos* is translated as "words" 218 times and "sayings" 50 times. In context, Jesus is saying that "whosoever," meaning anyone, that "hears" and "does" what He just taught in the Sermon on the Mount is like a wise man that when the floods came his house stood. He describes those who "do not" obey His words, as a foolish man whose house collapsed when the storms came.

The above verse, Matthew 7:24, starts out with "*therefore.*" Thus we need to look at the previous 3

verses to find out why Jesus said “*therefore*.” In these verses we find a shocking judgment scene:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matthew 7:21-23

Jesus said “*therefore*” in verse 24 to give us the answer how not to be in the group that says “*Lord, Lord*,” and find out He never knew us. Wouldn’t this be one the most important self examinations we should do to be sure Jesus will know us on judgment day?

According to Jesus, to be in the group that He knows, you must be the one that hears His sayings and obeys them. In verse 22, they are saying “*Lord, Lord*.” They are begging Jesus. They are completely baffled. But He told them His requirements and they chose not to obey them.

Isn’t this shocking? They are prophesying, casting out demons, and doing many wonderful works in *Jesus*’ name. Have you ever cast out a demon in Jesus’ name? Have you ever prophesied in Jesus’ name? These people thought they were Christians, and they had amazing, miraculous works to prove it to themselves. But they were wrong.

Jesus said He NEVER knew them and that they were workers of “iniquity.” The Greek word for iniquity means without law. It could be translated “you that practice lawlessness.” And that is why Jesus did not know them, because they refused to obey His laws.

Are we to obey Jesus words? The child like interpretation would understand Jesus when He said “*whosoever*” to mean anyone and “*doeth them*” as obey.

Is it possible to know and even memorize Jesus words and not obey them? The Pharisees had the scriptures and thought that they were in a saving relationship with God. But Jesus said to them:

And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word (logos) abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. John 5:37-40

They thought they knew God, but Jesus said they had never heard His voice at anytime and they did not have His word (*logos*) inside them. This is alarming. They did not have God’s word in them, though they had the scrolls with it written and made a profession of studying and living by them.

In the past, God spoke to man by the prophets, but the New Testament tells us now He has spoken to man by His son.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. Hebrews 1:1-2

According to the scripture, the way in which God communicates to us today is by His Son that He sent to speak His words. John 1:1 and Revelation 19:13 call Jesus the “*Word (Logos) of God*.” And in 1 John 1:1 He is called the “*Word (Logos) of life*.” His words, message, and commandments are all from God the

Father. He spoke the words (*logos*) that the Father wants to speak to us. When Jesus opened His mouth, everything He uttered was from God the Father.

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words (logos): and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings (logos): and the word (logos) which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. John 14:23-24

As we saw previously, God has spoken to us by His Son. So when Jesus said “*If a man love me he will keep my words (logos),*” this message was from God.

The one who obeys His words is the one that the Father loves. In fact, according to this verse, we cannot say we love God if we are not obeying His Son’s words that He spoke while on earth.

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. John 12:49

These words (*logos*) that the Son spoke are so important. Jesus tells us that the words (*logos*) He spoke will be our judge. And that He will not judge us, but that the words He spoke will be our judge.

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word (logos) that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. John 12:47-50

Jesus made the statement, he who “*rejects me, and receiveth not my words*” will be judged. Jesus and His words are a package deal. We only fool ourselves to think we can have Him without His words.

Jesus was speaking this to real people of His day. And He said in past tense “*the word that I have spoken*” shall judge him in the last day. The childlike understanding would be His physical words (*logos*) He spoke while walking this earth will be our judge.

If this is the case, why is this not the top priority of every church? Why is every church not studying and determining how to obey the words of Christ?

If I were a sheriff and posted some laws on the court wall, and then told everyone that as of next week you will be judged by those laws and thrown into prison if you do not obey, wouldn’t you want to spend much time determining how you line up?

Let me paint a picture in your mind. We see the Father sending His Son with a message to the whole earth. He tells Him what He will endure to deliver this message. Now we see a following taking shape of Jews and Gentiles obeying what He taught at face value for 250 years. After that time period we see a new kind of group. They bear His Son’s name but they are not obeying the words He taught, and have reinterpreted them. Is this really the heart of God? Was His Son just speaking into the wind and didn’t really expect us to follow them?

That would be like me asking my son before I left for the day to mow the lawn, but when I returned I found that he had not performed the job. When I asked him why he hadn’t done what I told him to do, he told me that he knew the reason why I wanted the lawn mowed was because we were having company for dinner and they called and cancelled. But the fact remains that he disobeyed me. He assumed that I

wanted it mowed because of the guests, but I just wanted it mowed.

Are we looking for a logical reason why Jesus would give us commands, or are we just being obedient, even if we do not understand or if it goes against our nature?

If the Sermon on the Mount is just an ideal that could never be followed, then why does Jesus end it with whoever does these things will be like a wise man? Why would He waste the time to come to earth and speak and be killed by mankind if He did not want us to follow His teachings? Where is one passage where Jesus told us not to take His teachings literally? Doesn't it make sense that we obey and follow the founder of our religion?

Are Jesus Words For The Gentiles?

Some would have us believe in progressive revelation. Meaning that Jesus' words are for the Jews in a future kingdom, and Paul preached another gospel for the Gentiles. But Paul said otherwise:

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words (logos), even the words (logos) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 1 Timothy 6:36

According to Paul, we must not associate with men that “*consent not*” to the “*words of our Lord Jesus Christ*,” and we are commanded to “*withdraw*” ourselves from them. He even calls our Lord's words “*wholesome*.”

Paul tells us that when Jesus comes back, the judgment standard will be whether we know God and if we OBEY the gospel of Jesus Christ! And as we discussed earlier, you cannot know God if you do not obey Him.

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 1:8

In the above verse, Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, is telling a Gentile church that they must obey what Jesus taught or they will be condemned with flaming fire. Also notice, that it is not enough to believe the gospel, but they must obey it! Just as someone is judged in the USA and found guilty because they broke the laws of their land, if we break the laws that Jesus taught (gospel), we will be judged by it. John further confirms that the one who says he knows God must obey Christ's commandments and His word (*logos*).

And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ... And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word (logos), in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. 1 John 2:1-6

John instructs us that our walk *must* look like Christ's walk and that we should be obeying Jesus Christ's word (*logos*). We should analyze our every step and ask the question “Is this what Jesus would do? Is this how He would walk?”

In Hebrews, we find that salvation is given to those that obey Jesus.

*And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.
Hebrews 5:9*

Salvation is tied to obedience to Jesus Christ. And he said we are to obey the words He spoke while on earth. Are we doing that?

How do we know if we are part of God's family? Do we just say a prayer? Jesus answered that question when He said that His mother and brothers are those who hear His words (*logos*) and obey them.

My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word (logos) of God and do it. Luke 8:21

Jesus considers His family the ones that obey what He taught.

If Jesus came just to die, then why did he spend 3 1/2 years teaching and telling the world of a message from His Father. Since his message is so important, we should never be ashamed of the words He taught. We ought to love, cherish, and obey Him *and* his words.

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words (logos), of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. Luke 9:26

Jesus words are permanent. They apply to everyone.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words (logos) shall not pass away. Matthew 24:35

At the end of Christ's earthly ministry He sent His disciples out into the world and instructed them to teach people to obey what He taught them.

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.
Matthew 28:19*

This would apply to us today. Our job is still to go and make followers of Christ, who walk like Him, and who obey everything He taught.

At the end of Luke 6, another parallel version of the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus gives us further detail into judgment day and how we will be judged.

And why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Luke 6:46

According to Jesus Christ, you cannot call him Lord, and disobey him. The word lord means "a master." When we say that Jesus is our Lord, then it means that we are His servants and just as a servant obeys his master, we obey Jesus. A servant would never wake up one day and say "How can I please myself today?" No, he would say "How can I please my master?" and would be about his master's work.

Peter, the disciple and Apostle of Jesus Christ tells the church on how Jesus will judge each one of us.

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17

We are warned about the end for them that "obey not the gospel of God." If Jesus words were the Father's words, then the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Gospel of God. And Peter tells us we must be obeying, not

just believing the gospel.

What is the Gospel? It was preached by Jesus and His Apostles, and we are told to obey it.

The word gospel simply means good news. It is also translated glad tidings in the King James Version. So whatever Jesus was preaching was good news.

When Jesus first began to preach he said “Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” The theme of His message was the Kingdom of Heaven/God.

In Luke 9:2, Jesus sent out His 12 Apostles to preach. He instructed them to “preach the kingdom of God.”

And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. Luke 9:2

After Jesus finished instructing them about their journey, just 4 verses later, Luke tells us “they departed.... preaching the gospel”.

And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. Luke 9:6

Jesus told them to preach the Kingdom, and the message the Apostles preached was called the gospel or good news. According to Luke, the Gospel is the Kingdom of God. Christ’s kingdom offered to mankind is good news.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. Matthew 24:14

Of course the Jews were expecting this kingdom, but they were expecting it to be different than how Christ was portraying it.

When we preach the gospel today, our message should be that Christ is offering a kingdom, where He is Lord and King, and we can be His subjects. He has set up laws for His kingdom, His words (*logos*), and will give us the power to obey Him if we repent. We can have forgiveness from the sins we have committed by His death and shedding of His blood. He has risen and sits at the right hand of the Father. This is the gospel of His kingdom which is truly good news.

In the professing church today, you hear little of the Kingdom of God and its laws and more of the sinners prayer and grace. But was this the message of Jesus, Peter, James, John, and Paul?

Early Gentile Church Obedience

Do we have evidence of others that obeyed Jesus teaching’s literally? The first 250 years of Christianity including Gentiles did, until a man named Constantine corrupted the church. Before Constantine, the church taught the definition of the word Christian meant a person who follows Christ and obeys His teachings literally:

Let it be understood that those who are not living by Christ’s teachings are not Christians at all—even though they might profess his teachings with their lips. Justin Martyr 100-165 A.D.

How can a man say that he believes in Christ if he does not do what Christ commanded him to do? Cyprian 249-258 A.D.

He that is freed owes obedience to his deliverer. Therefore, he who desires to be a Christian should imitate what Christ said and did. Cyprian 249-258 A.D.

What does it mean to follow Christ? He follows Christ who stands in Christ's commandments. Who walks in the way of his teaching. Who follows his footsteps and his ways. Who imitates those things that Christ both taught and did. Cyprian 249-258 A.D.

You abuse the commands of the Lord, yet you call yourself his sons! Commodianus 250 A.D.

The word disciple comes from the word discipline. And they had a discipline; it was what Jesus taught. All the Apostles, including Paul, as I will show later, wrote about the need to obey Jesus' teachings in their epistles.

Jesus foretold:

If they have kept my saying (logos), they will keep yours also. John 15:20

The early church received all the Apostles writings as explanation and directions on obeying Jesus.

Why don't we at least consider the interpretation of those who were taught by the disciples of the Apostles, namely the early church? They lived in the same culture, had the same mindset, and spoke the same language that the New Testament was written in.

Wouldn't a seeker of the truth at least find out why they interpreted that Jesus required us to obey His words at face value? The entire church uniformly agreed on basic doctrines for the first 250 years. If the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth, wouldn't He have guided them in the first and second century also? Our truth should be the same as their truth, or one of us has not been following the Holy Spirit.

Some believe that the entire church in the first century, from Rome to Jerusalem to Egypt uniformly corrupted the doctrine that was handed to them from the Apostles within one century. Is this really possible?

Let's compare this assumption to today's professing church. The Baptists still have the same basic beliefs and ordinances today as they did a century ago. So do the Lutherans, Methodists, and Mennonites, etc. Spirituality often wanes after one century but not cardinal doctrines and ordinances.

Do we really believe that the Apostles first delivered the gospel to them allowing involvement in government, engagement in war, storing up treasure and divorce and remarriage, but a century later the church as a whole did exactly the opposite? Or is the first and second century Christian witness true that what they taught (no war, no remarriage, etc) are the teachings the Apostles delivered to them.

Remember, they did not have modern communication as we do, like internet or cell phones to quickly spread heresy. Their proof that they were teaching what the Apostles handed them was that there were no deviations in foundational doctrines though the church was spread out across the globe:

"It is absurd to claim that the apostles either were ignorant of the whole scope of the message they were given to declare or that they failed to teach the entire rule of faith. Let us see if perhaps the churches, through their own faith, altered the faith delivered to them by the apostles... Suppose, then, that all of the churches have erred and that the Holy Spirit did not have enough concern for even one church to lead it into truth, even though that is the reason Christ sent him to us... Suppose, too, that the Holy Spirit, this Steward of God and Victor of

Christ, neglected his office and permitted the churches to understand incorrectly and to teach differently than what he himself was teaching through the apostles.”

“If that is the case, is it likely that so many churches would have gone astray and all still end up with one and the same faith? No random deviation by so many people could result in all of them coming to the same conclusion. If the churches had fallen into doctrinal errors, they would've certainly ended up with varying teachings. However, when that which was deposited [i.e. the Christian faith] among many is still found to be one and the same, it is not the result of error, but of long established custom.” Tertullian 190 A.D.

If the churches had departed from the one true faith preached by the Apostles, how did they all end up teaching the same thing? There were no church wide councils, seminaries, printed literature, or other means to quickly disseminate erroneous teachings throughout the church. So how could all of the congregations have independently come up with the same interpretations and practices unless they were simply following what Paul and the other Apostles had taught?

They all had the same understanding even though they were dispersed throughout the whole world. Why would the whole church degenerate from teachings the flesh loves to teachings the flesh hates? The truth is, the church was following the gospel exactly the way Jesus delivered it to His Apostles who faithfully delivered it to the Church.

Jesus said:

If ye obey my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. John 15:10

The early church did and taught exactly that. They taught to remain in Jesus' love, we must obey His commandments. They knew that we could not earn His gift of salvation. The price is too high and we could never pay it. But, they also knew that Jesus has requirements for His love. As shocking as that thought is to our 21st century critical thinking, we must not correct Jesus. He said *“If ye obey my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.”* His love is conditional.

God loved us enough to make a way of reconciliation by sending His Son. That is why we read *“God so loved the world.”* But this love does not mean we all are automatically saved, otherwise every one would go to heaven. Jesus told us how we must be reconciled. He told us how to experience a saving love. *“If ye obey my commandments, ye shall abide in my love,” and:*

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father.” John 14:21

Please do not misunderstand me and think that I am advocating that all we need to do is robotically obey Jesus Christ without true faith to be saved. I am trying to point out that the modern church does not teach this necessary component of a saving relationship with Christ and therefore it is only half of the truth.

What about Grace?

Didn't Paul teach that it is by grace that you are saved, not of works? Are we going to interpret Paul through the lens of Jesus Christ, or Jesus Christ through lens of Paul? Paul can be harmonized perfectly if we choose to interpret His teachings through the lens of Jesus Christ's as the early church did.

The next verse of “*For by grace are ye saved*” says “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” So we are created to perform and walk in good works.

Jude warns us that men will creep into the church “*turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.*” (Jude 1:4) Lasciviousness means looseness or filthiness. A modern translation says “Ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's grace allows us to live immoral lives.” Doesn't this sound like what is happening in the professing church today?

Peter warns us that some have taken Paul's teachings and twisted them to their own destruction.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:14-16

The word wrest means twist. Peter tells us that there are men that are twisting Paul's words and teaching something with his words that he did not intend and this heresy will cause them destruction. Could the church today be making the same mistake?

Maybe we need to take a closer look at what grace is. We are told by the same author, Paul, who wrote “for by grace ye are saved”:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Titus 2:11-12

Grace teaches us? This means grace is more than unmerited favor. It is performing an action according to Paul. It is teaching us to live holy. The Hymn writer, John Newton, understood this concept of grace when he penned the verse two in Amazon Grace as “twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.” Paul told the Corinthians:

I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10

Once again the same writer explains grace as laboring inside him. Grace is power. Grace is not a license to sin, but could be described as a gift from God giving us the power to obey His Son and live holy.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

In this passage, Paul teaches the Corinthians that God-given grace will produce an abundance of good works in us. I hate to sound like a broken record, but the above English word “work” is the same Greek word in “for by grace...not of works.”

We are not saved by self produced works. When we come to the end of our self, by faith and submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ and repent, He will come in, and by the power of His Spirit, give us grace to live for Him. It is not our works that earn salvation; we could never earn it nor match His holiness. But there is a requirement. His grace must be producing an obedient, love, faith relationship with Him, and we must be connected to the vine (Him) with His life sap (grace) flowing through us. Below is a quote from an early church writer explaining this concept:

A man by himself working and toiling at freedom from sinful desires achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows himself to be very eager and earnest about this, he attains it by the addition of the power of God. God works together with willing souls. But if the person abandons his eagerness, the spirit from God is also restrained. To save the unwilling is the act of one using compulsion; but to save the willing, that of one showing grace. Clement of Alexandria 190 A.D.

To illustrate this concept, we could think of welfare. Is it possible to earn welfare? If you wanted welfare could you go out and perform a certain job to earn it? No. But are there qualifications to receive welfare? Is it partly contingent on your income? Yes. Can circumstances change in someone's life to disqualify them from welfare? Yes. Salvation is the same way. You can never earn it, but there are requirements to receive it.

Just as works should never be emphasized on its own, neither should grace. We need to have both in our lives. We must have a grace that is producing works in us, or it is not the grace of the Bible. If you came to me and told me that this was an apple tree, I would verify that apple tree by the fruit that it produced. If I found that it produced pears, I would call you a liar. In the same way, if you say you have grace from God, is that grace producing an obedience to the one that is supplying the grace?

Eternal Security

You may be thinking, "It sounds like you don't believe in unconditional eternal security?" Did Jesus teach unconditional eternal security? In John 15, Jesus gave us an example of our relationship of Him as the vine and we the branches. He told us, without Him we can do nothing. Then He told us:

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. John 15:2

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. John 15:6

According to verse 2, even if we are "in" Christ, but are not bearing fruit, he removes us. That would mean we are NOT connected to the vine anymore. And notice in verse 6, how can a branch wither, unless it was connected to the vine and alive before it withered? Is it a good thing for a branch (you and me) to be cast into the fire? And finally, notice who made the choice to no longer remain in the vine; "*if a man abide not in me.*" The choice is ours to make.

Jesus said in verse 9 "*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.*" We have a choice to abide in His love by obeying His commandments. The choice is ours. If we choose not to, according to Christ we will be severed from the vine and burned.

I would encourage you to read Mathew through Jude in large portions and look at the entire message and

ask yourself if unconditional eternal security fits the message of the New Testament. As you are reading, look at the unconditional security passages in context and compare them to the many warnings and if's in the Bible. Look at how these verses can be interpreted harmoniously and applied to those who are obeying Jesus Christ.

The most popular that I have heard is:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Romans 8:35

Now look earlier in the same chapter:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1

There is condemnation for those who walk after the flesh according to the beginning of Romans 8:

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Romans 8:6-9

If you are not living carnally, and you are not walking after the flesh, but you are walking after the Spirit, you can have the joy and peace of claiming Romans 8:35. But we should do this in the fear of God as Paul taught the Corinthians:

*Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
2 Corinthians 7:1*

And Paul also told the Corinthians that there was a deceptive teaching going around that the unrighteous would inherit the Kingdom of God. He tells us very clearly that no unrighteous person shall inherit it. He gave a list of those who would not qualify:

*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.
1 Corinthians 6:9-10*

Jesus also taught us that unforgiveness can cause us to lose our forgiveness from the Heavenly Father. In Matthew 18:21-35, after Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother, Jesus illustrated unforgiveness with a King that called in a servant to make payment on everything he owed him. His debt was worth about 10 million dollars in today's equivalent and he could not pay. The king commanded the servant, his wife, his children, and all his possessions to be sold to make payment. The servant fell down and "worshipped" the king and begged for patience to pay the debt. He had compassion and "forgave" the debt. Then the servant went out and found a fellow servant that owed him about \$18. The first servant took him by the throat and commanded him to pay everything. The fellow servant fell down and begged

him to give him time. But the first servant had no patience with him, and threw him into prison. When the king heard of this, he was outraged and threw the first servant into prison to be tortured until he could pay all that he owed. The king unforgave the man the debt. After Jesus ended this parable He said:

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. Matthew 18:35

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us:

If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15

Do we really grasp how important this is? Do we really believe that simple unforgiveness can cause us to loose our place in heaven? James even tells the brothers that he is writing to that they could be condemned for simply grumbling!

Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. James 5:9

In Revelation Jesus rebukes a church that is lukewarm. He commands them to repent.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Revelation 3:14-19

This church was living on the edge. They looked like Christians, professed to be Christians, and thought they were Christians, but Jesus says they did not know that they needed to repent from being lukewarm. If they did not repent, they would be spit, or vomited out of His mouth. It does not sound like a good thing to be spit out of Jesus' mouth.

I marvel that even the apostle Paul was concerned about giving into his fleshly temptations and falling away:

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. 1 Corinthians 9:27

The word castaway is also translated rejected and reprobate. The whole context is a warning to the Corinthians that they are running a race to win. If you read the above verse in context and then into chapter 10, you will find Paul seriously warning the Corinthians and comparing them to Israel who fell away. Paul considered his body an enemy with which he must contend and was concerned that after he had preached to others, he could be rejected by Jesus Christ if he did not continue to deny himself. Paul ends this admonishment with:

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12

Jesus, James, John, Peter, and Paul all taught that our salvation is conditional on our obedience to His commands. And it should be no surprise that the early church taught the same thing:

A person who is continually and repeatedly repenting for the same sins does not differ from those who have never believed, except that unbelievers are not aware that they are sinning. And I don't know which of the two is worse. So the frequent asking of forgiveness for those things in which we continually transgress is not true repentance. It is merely the semblance of repentance. Clement of Alexandria 195 A.D.

Look you, brethren, lest His benefits, which are many, turn unto judgment to all of us, if we walk not worthily of Him, and do those things which are good and well-pleasing in His sight with concord. It is right therefore that we should not be deserters from His will. Clement of Rome 96 A.D.

Faith Without Obedience

But the Bible says “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” I thought I just needed to believe in Jesus?

What does it mean when Jesus said believe? Does it mean I just mentally ascent that He died and rose again? Remember that when Jesus said “believe” he hadn't died yet.

There were some that believed Jesus when He was speaking to them and He told them what it means to “believe in him:”

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word (logos), then are ye my disciples indeed. John 8:31

Jesus defined belief to His listeners: to believe in Him, is to continue in His word (*logos*).

Jesus further explains true belief:

He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.

John 14:12

We are told by the master that the one who truly believes on Him will do the works He did. We think this means miracles, but this is the same greek word for works in “for by grace are ye saved, not of works.” So works do not bring salvation, but true salvation produces works empowered by God.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. John 3:21

James the Apostle of our Lord defined belief:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?...Faith without works is dead...By works a man is justified, and not by faith only. James 2:14, 20, 24

James writes that the devils also believe in Jesus, but it means nothing:

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. James

2:19

Peter also explained that there is more required than just faith:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-11

Peter tells us to add to our faith. This would indicate that Peter agrees with James, that faith alone is not enough. He writes that if faith, virtue, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are in you and abounding, you will not be unfruitful and will have an “*entrance*” into the kingdom of our Lord. But he that does not possess these qualities is blind and cannot see afar off. He encourages to “*make your calling and election sure.*”

Jesus shows us in the parable of the sower that some will hear the word (*logos*) but in time of temptation they fall away:

They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word (logos) with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. Luke 8:13

This would indicate that they believed at one time, but then fell away.

Some think Paul did not teach that works are a requirement but faith alone. But this is not the case. When Paul is standing in front of King Agrippa, he tells the king of what he taught both Jews and Gentiles:

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Acts 26:19-20

Paul again teaches the Romans:

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed. Romans 15:18

And deed is that same greek word as used in Ephesians 2:8-9.

If I told you that in order to get to heaven you had to eat pretzels on Wednesday, if you really believed me and wanted to go to heaven you would begin eating pretzels every Wednesday. You could not say you believed me, and not do it. Be not deceived, if we believe Jesus, we will obey what He said. It would be like Jesus saying:

He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it., whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple., he that is greatest among you shall be

your servant....he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. Matthew 10:38-39, John 6:47

Below are some quotes from the early church speaking of what it means to believe:

Trusting is more than bare faith. For when a person has believed that the Son of God is our Teacher, he trusts that his teacher is true. Clement of Alexandria 150-215 A.D.

To obey the Logos [Christ], whom we call the Teacher, means to believe him, going against him in nothing. Clement of Alexandria 150-215 A.D.

If we truly have authentic faith, it will be accompanied by abundant works. It will not be a self producing work, but Jesus Christ working in us. They will be works that He described in his teachings:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. John 15:5

And Paul agrees with this concept, that a person can profess Jesus as Lord, but their works prove otherwise:

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Titus 1:16

Reprobate is translated in other places as “cast away” or “rejected.”

Disciples vs. Christian

To get around obedience, some would want to make a distinction between a disciple and a Christian. Is being a disciple a higher calling than being an average Christian? We find the word “Christian” in the bible 3 times and the word “disciple(s)” 274 times. In Acts we are told specifically that the disciples were called Christians:

*The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
Acts 11:26*

Before they were called Christians, all followers of Jesus were called disciples. The name Christian was a nickname given to the disciples by the non-Christians. According to the Webster's 1828 dictionary, one of the definitions of the word Christian is “A real disciple of Christ; one who believes in the truth of the Christian religion, and studies to follow the example, and obey the precepts, of Christ.”

But before the name Christian was ever used, they called themselves disciples. The definition of the word disciple is a “learner” or “pupil.” In fact, the Greek word for “*teach*” (matheteuo) used in the Great Commission “*Go ye therefore and teach,*” comes from the same Greek word as disciple (mathetes) and simply means to instruct and make disciples. So the Great Commission is to go and make disciples of all nations.

Early Church Interpretations

What did the early church practice that the modern day professing church does not? Let’s take a brief look at some of the basic teachings of Jesus and their interpretation.

- They taught that when Jesus said *“resist not evil”* and *“love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you,”* that to be a Christian you could not engage in war or defend yourself. How can you love your enemies while killing them?
 - Mat 5:38-48, Luk 6:27-36, Mat 10:16, Joh 18:36, Joh 18:11, Luk 3:14, Rom 12:17-21, Rom 13:2, Jas 5:5, 1 Pet 2:21-23, 1 Pet 4:1-2, Jam 4:7, Eph 6:12, 2 Cor 10:4, Heb 13:13, Heb 10:34, 1 Cor 6:7, Act 5:41, 1 Cor 13:4, Jam 4:1, 1 Thes 5:15
- When Jesus said *“whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery,”* that to be a Christian you cannot marry a divorced person. The only allowance for re-marriage is the death of a spouse. They taught that marriage while a former spouse was still living was a continual state of adultery, and that an adulterer could not inherit the Kingdom of God.
 - Mat 5:31-32, Mat 19:7-10, Mar 10:1-12, Luk 16:18; Rom 7:2-3, 1 Cor 7:10-11 & 39, 1 Cor 6:9-11, Gal 5:19-21, Mar 6:17-18, Ezra 10:11-14
- When Jesus said *“whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery,”* that to be a Christian you cannot look with lust. And if you do, you are committing adultery and no adulterer would inherit the Kingdom of God.
 - Mat 5:28, 1 Cor 6:9-11, Gal 5:19-21, Heb 13:4, Jam 4:4, Rev 2:22
- When Jesus said *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,”* that this was a command and not a suggestion. If we lay up treasure, our heart will be on that treasure and not on the Kingdom of God. You can’t just say your heart is not on it. Jesus said, *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* If you have treasure stored up, your heart WILL be on it, it’s not an option. And when Jesus taught *“Ye cannot serve God and mammon”* a Christian must beware of riches and wealth because it may choke him out of the Kingdom.
 - Mat 6:19-21, Mat 6:24, Luk 6:24, Luk 12:15, 1 Tim 6:6-11, 1 Tim 6:17-19, Jas 1:10-11, Rev 3:17-18, Mat 8:20
- When Jesus said *“whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire”* and *“whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment,”* that to be a Christian you cannot have anger and hostility toward a brother without being in danger of eternal punishment. James agrees with our Lord by saying *“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.” James 5:9*
 - Mat 5:22, Jam 5:9, 1 Joh 4:20, Jam 3:6, Jam 4:11-12
- When Jesus taught *“if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,”* that unforgiveness will sever us from our relationship with Jesus.
 - Mat 6:15, Mar 11:26, Luke 6:37, Mat 18:22-35, John 15:6
- When Jesus taught *“Thou shalt not forswear thyself”* that a Christian cannot take an oath.
 - Mat 5:33-37, Jam 5:12
- When Jesus taught *“But let your communication be, Yea, yea”* that a Christian must be known by his honesty and truthfulness because he fears God.
 - Mat 5:27, Jam 5:12, 1 Cor 7:1
- When Jesus taught *“strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* that a Christian must *“strive to enter”* to be saved (Luke 13:24) in a life long obedience and love relationship. A profession or prayer will not save you on the Day of Judgment. You must live a life of holiness.
 - Mat 7:14, Luk 13:24, Mat 7:21-22, Luk 6:46, Gal 4:9, 2 Cor 13:5, Tit 1:16, Php 2:12, Heb 12:14, Heb 10:26, 1 Pet 1:17, 1 Pet 4:18, 2 Pet 3:14, 2 Pet 1:8-10

- When Jesus said the wise man is he who *“heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them”* that it was expected from anyone that bears the name Christian, Jew and Gentile, to obey what Jesus taught literally.

- Mat 7:24-27, Luk 6:46-49, Jam 1:22, Mat 13:19-23, Luk 8:11-18, Mat 28:19-20, 1 John 2:3-6

As you can see, the early Christians followed Christ literally in a child like understanding. Below is a comment by Justin Martyr explaining what made a Christian different from the world.

The teachings of Jesus have transformed our lives. We who previously delighted in immorality now embrace chastity exclusively. We who used to practice magical arts now devote our lives to the good and unbegotten God. We who valued the acquisition of wealth and possessions above all things now bring what we have into a common pool and share with everyone in need. Many of us used to hate and destroy one another; we would not live with people of a different race because of their different customs. But now, since the coming of Christ, we live closely with such people, and we pray for our enemies. We seek to persuade those who unjustly hate us to live by the wonderful teachings of Christ so that they can enjoy the wonderful hope of God’s reward with us.

Christ also taught us to suffer patiently, to be ready to serve all others, and to be free from anger. ‘If a man strikes you on one cheek, offer the other to him also. And do not hinder the one who would take away your cloak or coat. Whoever stays angry is in danger of the fire of punishment. If anyone compels you to go with him a mile, go two. And let your good work shine before men that, upon seeing them, they may glorify your father in heaven.’

Christ also taught us not to struggle with others, or to imitate wicked people. Rather, he urged us to lead all people away from dishonor and wickedness by our patience and gentleness. The fact that we actually follow his teachings is demonstrated by the many Christians who once followed your way of thinking. Now they have changed their violent and oppressive dispositions. Some of them were won to Christianity by the righteousness they observed in the life of their Christian neighbors. Others were won by the extraordinary restraint Christian travelers displayed when they were cheated. Still others were attracted by the honesty of the Christians with whom they transacted business. Justin Martyr 100-165 A.D.

We must remember that the early church had the advantage of both the written scriptures and the Apostles oral teachings.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 2 Thessalonians 3:6

Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. 1 Corinthians 11:2

I am not advocating we follow the early church in practices found outside of the New Testament. But what I am advocating is if the childlike understanding of a passage is different from the modern day

theological understanding, but concurs with the early church's practice, shouldn't we at least question whether they could have been right? Can we really better interpret the scriptures 2000 years later?

I Just Use The Bible

Many say they use the Bible alone, but why do we all arrive at different interpretations? I would venture to say you don't just "use the Bible." Have you ever read a spiritual book? Have you ever listened to a sermon? Have you read a Bible commentary? A church that just used the Bible alone would be a church that only read from it every Sunday without a comment or sermon. I have never heard of a church like that, have you? We have all been affected by our culture and teachers on how we interpret and apply the Bible.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. Mark 10:15

Old Testament vs. New Testament

Others would want to disprove the early church's interpretation by taking the example of men in the Old Covenant. Some would say "I believe in the whole Bible. I don't need to consider the early church." They would say that David was a man of God and he killed his enemies. Or that the Proverbs teach us to store up wealth. But I would remind you that the early church read and taught from these passages also. They were not unaware that they existed. So why did they interpret them differently than we do today? The pivotal difference was their interpretation of the two covenants and the Kingdom of God versus the kingdoms of this world. When Jesus said:

The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseseth into it. Luke 16:16

They viewed it as such. There were two covenants. Two kingdom spheres. Two ways God has dealt with mankind. They believed that God dealt with physical Israel differently than He deals with men in the spiritual Kingdom of God. Most every person I know that professes Christ believes this to a certain extent. If we did not, we would still be stoning a person who picked up a stick on the Sabbath and sacrificing animals.

All of us do away with certain ordinances and practices from the Old Covenant that we interpret as fulfilled such as stoning, keeping the Sabbath day (Saturday), sacrificing animals, etc. But commandments in the New Covenant like resisting evil, storing up treasure, and divorce and remarriage taught by Jesus are not followed but instead harmonized or nullified with the Old Covenant.

Jesus plainly answered Pilot on the subject of His followers fighting:

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. John 18:36

Jesus told Pilot that His servants do not fight because His Kingdom is not of this world. If this was true then, it is still true today. I ask you, where do we find one example of Jesus or His servants fighting? I can only think of one, Peter, and he was rebuked and told to put his sword away. On another occasion when

His disciples wanted to kill as they did in the Old Testament, Jesus rebuked them and told them they did not have the His spirit.

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village. Luke 9:54-56

According to the above text, Jesus' purpose was to save lives, not to destroy as they did their enemies in the Old Testament. If we are in Jesus' Kingdom, seeking it first, then we will have the same spirit, the spirit to save men's lives and not destroy them.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus plainly makes a change when he says "ye have heard that it was said by them of old time...but I say unto you." Jesus instructs us that the Kingdom of God is different from the kingdom of Israel. Tertullian interpreted Christ in this way when he wrote:

Men of old were used to requiring " eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" and to repay evil for evil, with usury! ... But after Christ has supervened and has united the grace of faith with patience, now it is no longer lawful to attack others even with words, nor to merely say " fool," without danger of the judgment. ...Christ says, " Love your enemies and bless your curses, and pray for your persecutors."

For what difference is there between provoker and provoked? The only difference is that the former was the first to do evil, but the latter did evil afterwards. Each one stands condemned in the eyes of the Lord for hurting a man. For God both prohibits and condemns every wickedness. In evil doing, there is no account taken of the order. ... The commandment is absolute: evil is not to be repaid with evil. Tertullian 200 A.D.

This is how the first century church interpreted the commandments of Jesus. They had the advantage to read the gospels, and ask the disciples of the Apostles if it was true.

Some may think that Jesus did not allow His followers to join in war or serve in government because Rome was pagan but it is permissible today because our country is Christian. But that is not the reason the early church gave. They did not engage simply because they were taught that Jesus commanded against it. They claimed that a Christian was to be "harmless as a dove" and sent as "sheep among wolves." A sheep cannot defend itself.

This subject is so important. We are talking about eternity. Each one of us will stand before the judge one day to give an account for "*every idle word.*" These interpretations can effect someone's eternal destruction. We could even be responsible for teaching false truth. Could we be responsible for believing or teaching a different Jesus?

He said, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, but do not do the things which I say?" For 'the people that love with their lips but have their hearts far away from the Lord' are not the people of the Lord. They trust in another lord and have willingly sold themselves to him. But those who keep the commandments of the Lord testify to Him by their very actions. Clement of Alexandria 195 A.D.

In my discussions with people on taking Christ's commandments literally, I have heard them reply "That

is not my God.” What if we have created a false Jesus that is not the Jesus of the Bible. I have even heard the statement “I could never serve a God like that.” Who are we to tell God how he will judge and act? We are created by God and he can choose how he demands us to live and how He determines to save us. What *if* you and I will be judged by Jesus Christ’s words? What if the early church’s interpretation on the Kingdom of God is right? We have no excuse.

This generation has more bible translations than any other. And almost any bible translation today will show you that Jesus said His words would be our judge and that many will say in distress “*Lord, Lord,*” and hear His reply He never knew them because they chose to be the foolish man who heard but did not obey what He said. Any bible translation would teach us not to resist evil, not to store up treasure, and not to marry a divorced woman, etc.

Impressions

Others may say “I have the words of Christ in my heart” or “I let the Holy Spirit guide me.” I would like to draw your attention to what Jesus said the Holy Spirit’s function would be:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14:26

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will help you remember what “*I have said unto you.*” Jesus further taught “*When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself*” and “*He shall glorify me.*” The Holy Spirit’s function is not to bring glory to himself but rather to remind you of what Jesus taught and glorify Him. Is that the function He is serving in your life? How could he contradict the very one he is trying to glorify? If the Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures then He has already revealed to us what Jesus’ will is on these matters and He cannot contradict the scriptures or we make Him a liar.

In Acts, Peter tells us that the Holy Spirit is only given to those who obey Jesus.

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. Acts 5:32

The early Christians claimed their teachings, practices and ordinances had been directly handed down to them by the Apostles including Paul. They were in a position to make that claim. We are not.

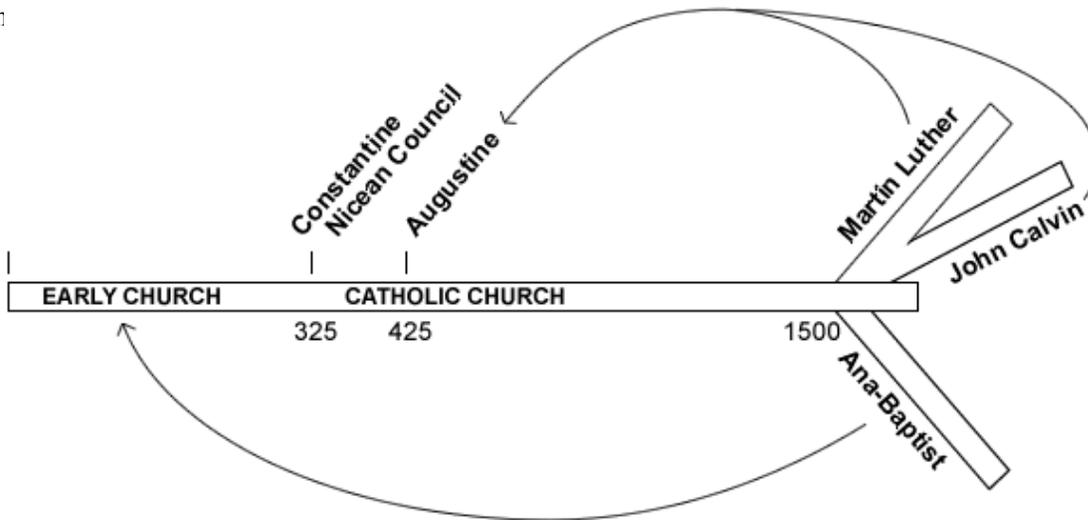
Early Church and Anabaptists vs. Modern Evangelicals

To sum this up, what is the main difference between the early Christian/Ana-Baptist’s interpretation, and the professing church of today? Their interpretation of Scripture is centered on the teachings of Christ and His call to discipleship. The rest of Scripture is then viewed through this lens and interpreted so as not to contradict the teachings of Christ, the head of the church. This produces different conclusions than when interpretation is centered on the writings of Paul as often seen in Evangelical teaching.

A Christ-centered interpretation maintains that Christ's teachings can be followed with God's enabling grace and must be followed if an entrance into the Kingdom of God is to be gained. A Paul-centered

interpretation tends to overemphasize man's sinful nature and makes man utterly helpless in the pursuit of good. Consequently, many of Christ's teachings are considered unattainable in the present. Some who interpret the Bible this way postpone the validity of Jesus' teachings to some future time. God's mercy and forgiveness are emphasized in this system rather than careful obedience.

There were 3 major wings of the reformation; Lutheran, Calvinist and Ana-Baptist, as I have tried to illustrate below. The Anabaptist wing is also known as the radical wing of the reformation. Luther and Calvin were influenced by the writings of Augustine and their churches looked much like what Augustine taught (i.e.. union of church and state, just war theory, election, infant baptism, etc.). On the other hand, the Anabaptist's were not satisfied with Augustine's interpretations and instead tried to restore the pri



Many of the modern movements today are a mixture of the 3 major wings above. For example some would not believe in the union of church and state and they would teach that adult baptism is the only correct method, but they would not have a problem killing their enemies and taking oaths. This clearly would be a mixture between Reformed and Anabaptist theology.

Who Will You Follow?

We all follow some kind of interpretation and tradition. The issue is which one will you use? Will you consider what the early church had to say? Or will you rely on the modern witness of our pastors and theologians? Are you willing to take the chance that Jesus did not mean what He said? Are you willing to take the risk that His words are not for you? If Jesus did intend for you to obey His teachings at face value, and you have not been, then you must repent and believe that what He was saying is from the Father. Believe that He has the words of Life. Believe that Jesus wants men to obey Him and to be sold out for His Kingdom. Please do not put it off another day. He waits to offer you true joy and fellowship. We all will stand before Jesus Christ one day to give an account and the words He spoke will be our judge.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 2 Corinthians 13:5

Appendix

The scope of this paper was intended to address how we obey Jesus Christ's teachings. It was not to be taken as an exhaustive study on any of the subjects discussed such as grace, eternal security, faith and works, non-resistance, divorce and remarriage, etc. I would encourage you to research all of these doctrines thru the lens of Jesus' teachings and also to examine how the early church taught them. Below are a few quotes from disciples in the church before Constantine. There are many more if you would want to study this in full.

NON RESITANCE

He commanded [His followers]... Not only not to strike others, but even, when they themselves are struck, to present the other cheek... [He commanded them] not only not to injure their neighbors, nor to do them any evil, but also, when they are dealt with wickedly, to be long-suffering. Irenaeus 180 A.D.

Paul teaches that a Christian does not keep count of injuries, for Paul does not allow him even to pray against the man who has done wrong to him. For he knows that the Lord expressly commanded us to pray for our enemies. Clement of Alexandria 195 A.D.

Christians are not allowed to use violence to correct the delinquencies of sins. -Clement of Alexandria 195 A.D.

Men of old were used to requiring "eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" and to repay evil for evil, with usury! ... But after Christ has supervened and has united the grace of faith with patience, now it is no longer lawful to attack others even with words, nor to merely say "fool," without danger of the judgment. ...Christ says, "Love your enemies and bless your curses, and pray for your persecutors." Tertullian 200 A.D.

For what difference is there between provoker and provoked? The only difference is that the former was the first to do evil, but the latter did evil afterwards. Each one stands condemned in the eyes of the Lord for hurting a man. For God both prohibits and condemns every wickedness. In evil doing, there is no account taken of the order. ... The commandment is absolute: evil is not to be repaid with evil. Tertullian 200 A.D.

The Lord will save them in that day - even His people - like sheep. ... No one gives the name of "sheep" to those who fall in battle with arms in hand, or those who are killed when repelling force with force. Rather, it is given only to those who are slain, yielding themselves up in their own place of duty and with patience-rather than fighting in self-defense. Tertullian 207 A.D.

When a Christian is arrested, he does not resist. Nor does he avenge himself against your unrighteous violence - even though our people are numerous and plentiful. Cyprian 250 A.D.

When we suffer such impious things, we do not resist even in word. Rather, we leave vengeance to God. Lactantius 304-313 A.D.

The Christian does injury to no one. He does not desire the property of others. In fact, he does not even defend his own property if it is taken from him by violence. For he knows how to patiently bear an injury inflicted upon him. Lactantius 304-313 A.D.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

"Sir," say I, "if a man who has a wife that is faithful in the Lord detect her in adultery, does the husband sin in living with her?"

"So long as he is ignorant," said he, "he sins not; but if the husband know of her sin, and the wife repent not, but continue in her fornication, and her husband live with her, he makes himself responsible for her sin and an accomplice in her adultery."

"What then, Sir," say I, "shall the husband do, if the wife continue in this case?" "Let him divorce her," said he, "and let the husband abide alone: but if after divorcing his wife he shall marry another, he likewise commits adultery." Hermas 150 A.D.

All who have been twice married by human law, are sinners in the eyes of our Master, and those who look upon a woman to lust

after her. For not only he who in act commits adultery is rejected by Him, but also he who desires to commit adultery: since not only our works, but also our thoughts, are open before God. Justin Martyr 167 A.D.

A wife must not depart from her husband. Or, if she should depart, she must remain unmarried. Cyprian 250 A.D.

Christ plainly forbids divorce; Moses unquestionably permits it. . .” Tertullian 219 A.D.

WEALTH AND PROSPERITY

Those who are rich in this world cannot be useful to the Lord unless their riches are cut down. Hermas 150 A.D.

Riches are to be partaken of rationally and given lovingly. Clement of Alexandria 195 A.D.

I know not whether the leg that has rejoiced in the anklet will suffer itself to be squeezed into the shackle! I fear the neck, beset with pearl and emerald nooses, will give no room to the broadsword! Wherefore, blessed (sisters), let us meditate on hardships, and we shall not feel them; let us abandon luxuries, and we shall not regret them. Let us stand ready to endure every violence, having nothing which we may fear to leave behind. It is these things which are the bonds which retard our hope. Let us cast away earthly ornaments if we desire heavenly. Tertullian 198 A.D.

Luxury does not entertain the fear of God. Novatian 235 A.D.

How can they follow Christ that are held back by the chain of their wealth? Cyprian 250 A.D.

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