

A REBUTTAL OF THE STATEMENT:

Church of Christ Heresies!

DANGER: Wolves in the Sheep Pen! (made by David J. Stewart)

Rebuttal by George Ebejer

My name is George Ebejer and I am Maltese and one of the elders of the church of Christ in Malta. I intend to give an answer the best way I can to all the false accusations that Mr. David J. Stewart (and all those who are distributing his article, even here in Malta) makes against the church of Christ. In my opinion, Mr. David J. Stewart (and those who agree with him) are making very serious accusations, not against me or against us as the church of Christ, but against Christ Himself and against His Word, the Holy Scriptures. And this I am going to prove.

My Question:

First of all, what authority do you have, Mr. David J. Stewart, to condemn others and WHO gave you that authority? Is it from heaven or from men? Please, give us an answer, Mr. Stewart!

The title included the word “heresies” which means: “doctrine or religious belief contrary to the teachings of the Church” and Mr. Stewart applies it to the church of Christ. So let us examine what Mr. Stewart says and see if the doctrine or religious belief of the church of Christ is contrary to the teachings of the Church or not. My answers are all in narrower margin under the title: **MY ANSWER**, so that they can be distinguished from what **Mr. David J. Stewart** says.

Church of Christ Heresies!

DANGER: Wolves in the Sheep Pen!

by David J. Stewart

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

Baptismal Regeneration?

Church of God followers do NOT believe in simple FAITH in Jesus Christ to be saved; on the contrary, they most definitely demand that BAPTISM be added for one to be saved.

MY ANSWER:

First of all Mr. Stewart shows his Christian love from the beginning by calling us, “Wolves in the Sheep Pen!” God will judge.

What about “baptismal Regeneration”? We are accused of this all the time.

The Matter of “Baptismal Regeneration”

Is the doctrine of “baptismal regeneration” scriptural? In order to answer such a question, one first must define precisely what he means by that designation.

Exactly what is “baptismal regeneration”? The phrase connotes different things to different people. For some, the expression is merely a bit of inflammatory rhetoric designed to intimidate those who affirm that baptism is a part of the regeneration process. To others, it is the notion that baptism is a “sacrament” which has a sort of mysterious, innate power to remove the contamination of sin — independent of personal faith and a volitional submission to God’s plan of redemption.

The doctrine of baptism’s essentiality has the support of the Bible; the “sacramental” ideology does not. Let us reflect upon this latter concept.

Baptism As a Mystical Sacrament

“Baptism,” as administered by the Roman Catholic Church, reflects a form of “baptismal regeneration” that is wholly at variance with the New Testament. A leading Catholic authority defines “baptism” in the following fashion:

“A sacrament of the New Law instituted by Jesus Christ, in which, as a result of washing with water accompanied by the words ‘I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,’ a human being is spiritually regenerated, and made capable of receiving the other sacraments” (Attwater, p. 45).

This view involves the idea that “baptism” need not be accompanied by faith, or personal surrender to the Lord. Note these additional citations from the same page of this volume.

“Baptism of the insane may be lawfully performed if such a desire has been expressed in a lucid interval, or in imminent danger of death if, before losing reason, a desire had been manifested. Those who have been insane from birth, or since before attaining the use of reason, may at any time be baptized as infants.”

“Baptism of the unborn. If there is not a probable hope that a child can be baptized after birth, Baptism may be administered in the womb: in the case of a head presentation, on the head; in other presentations on the part presented, but then it has to be again baptized conditionally if it is living on complete delivery. Should the mother die in labour, the child is to be extracted from the womb and, if certainly living, baptized absolutely; if life is doubtful, conditionally. An aborted foetus must also be baptized, unconditionally or conditionally according to the circumstances.”

The sentiments expressed by Attwater (whose book, incidentally, has the Imprimatur of the Roman Church) are wholly foreign to New Testament

doctrine. But how does the teaching of the New Testament differ from this concept of “baptismal regeneration”?

New Testament Baptism

First, there is nothing in the teaching of the Scriptures which would even remotely suggest that there is some magical essence inherent in the water of baptism that can effect forgiveness of sin. Rather, baptism, i.e., immersion in water, is a rite that is accompanied by both faith (**Mark 16:16**) and repentance (**Acts 2:38**). Void of those prerequisites, it has no validity whatever.

Second, baptism is an act of *obedience* wherein one expresses his confidence in the power of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection to produce pardon. Paul makes it quite clear that when one is buried with Christ through baptism, it is into the Lord’s death, i.e., the benefits of his death, that the sinner comes. And, just as the Son of God was raised from the dead to the glory of Father, even so, when one is raised from the burial of baptism, he passes into a state characterized as “newness of life” (**Rom. 6:4**). The power to save is in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Penitent believers access that power when they humbly submit to the Lord’s requirement to replicate the Saviour’s burial and resurrection in the action of baptism (cf. **Col. 2:12-13**).

Third, though we readily acknowledge that there is no “sacramental” power intrinsic to the water of baptism, that does not give us leave to repudiate the sacred connection between the rite of baptism and forgiveness. To do so, is to ignore numerous passages of the plainest import.

1. Salvation is preceded by both faith and baptism, according to the precise language of **Mark 16:16**. The Greek text literally suggests: “*He who has believed, and who has been immersed, shall be saved.*” In a parallel passage, baptism is viewed as the culminating act by which one is acknowledged as a disciple (**Mt. 28:19** – ASV).
2. Jesus informed Nicodemus that one does not enter the kingdom of God except by the new birth process (**John 3:5**), which involves “water,” i.e., baptism. Not many would deny that the new birth and “regeneration” are equivalents. Hence, there is a solid connection between regeneration and the birth that involves water. For fifteen centuries it was conceded that the “water” of this passage is an allusion to baptism. John Calvin introduced the *novel view* that the “water” must be spiritualized, and he has been followed by numerous advocates of the doctrine of salvation by “faith alone.” The historian Philip Schaff observed that Calvin’s view was an excessive reaction to the dogma of Catholicism, and that it is impossible to disassociate the “water” in this verse from the rite of baptism (Lange, p. 127).

3. When asked: “*What shall we do?*” by sincere folks who had been convicted of their sin guilt, Peter informed them that they must *repent and be baptized “for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38)*. No sectarian quibble can evade the force of this transparent command and the design associated with it.
4. Paul of Tarsus, who had been praying for days — and still was lost, was instructed to: “*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name*” (**Acts 22:16**). This was not “baptismal regeneration” in a mystical sense; rather, it was merely *submission to an inspired ordinance*.
5. It is by baptism that one is said to enter “*into Christ*” (**Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27**), wherein salvation is located (**2 Tim. 2:10**).
6. Paul describes baptism as a “*washing of water,*” or a “*washing of regeneration,*” in connection with which the sinner is “*cleansed*” or “*saved*” (**Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5**). A.T. Robertson, a Baptist scholar, concedes that both of these passages allude to water baptism (p. 607). And so, while the Roman Catholic dogma of “baptismal regeneration” is false, there is a perfectly legitimate nexus between baptism and regeneration.
7. Peter unequivocally affirms that baptism is involved in our salvation. Just as Noah and his family were transported from an environment of corruption into a realm of deliverance, so, similarly, in baptism we are moved from the world of defilement into a redeemed relationship with the Lord (**1 Pet. 3:21**).

One does not have to believe in the Catholic concept of “baptismal regeneration” in order to acknowledge that there is a relationship between water immersion and forgiveness, in the passages cited above.

The Principle Involved

Perhaps it would be helpful if we would illustrate, by other cases in the Scriptures, the principle that is involved in this relationship.

The Case of Naaman

Naaman was an officer in the Syrian army, but he was woefully afflicted with the dreaded disease leprosy. The prophet Elisha bade him go “*wash*” in the Jordan river seven times, promising that he would be “*clean.*” Finally, after some equivocation, the captain thus did, and his flesh was restored (**2 Kgs. 5:14**).

Certainly there was no merit in Jordan’s water, and there is no textual suggestion that Naaman was disposed to trust in the efficacy of the river; he simply came to a state of confidence in the prophet’s message. There was **no** “*water healing*” in this case. But who, thinking rationally, could

deny that his restoration was dependent upon submission to the divine command?

Question: Do you accept, Mr. David, that if Namaan did not go and dip himself SEVEN times, not once, not even six times, but SEVEN times he would not have been healed? But from your reasoning (and from others who agree with you) he would have been healed by believing only.

The Man Born Blind

Jesus once encountered a man who had been blind since birth. The Lord spat upon the ground and made a clay potion, anointing the man's eyes. He then commissioned the gentleman to: "*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*" (Jn. 9:7). The man obeyed; *he washed*, and came away seeing.

Was there medicinal value in Siloam's water? Of course not. Should the blind man have refused the Saviour's command? What if he had reasoned in this fashion that David and others teach: "*If I go and wash, that will suggest that I am trusting in water. I do not believe in 'washing restoration.'* *I do not wish to 'merit' my sight. Therefore, I will simply trust in Jesus' power to heal, and refrain from going to Siloam.*" **Just what would have been the result?**

Question: What would have been the result, Mr. David? Please give an honest answer!

Perhaps the following chart will help to put things in focus with reference to the connection between baptism and salvation, and the order of their occurrence, in the scriptural plan.

The Biblical Order

Baptism	Salvation (Mk. 16:1)
Born of Water	Enter Kingdom (Jn. 3:5)
Baptism	Remission of Sins (Acts 2:38)
Baptism	Remission of Sins (Acts 2:38)
Baptism	Washing (Acts 22:16)
Baptism	Death of Christ (Rom. 6:3)
Washed	Justified (1 Cor. 6:11)
Baptism	Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13)
Baptism	Clothed With Christ (Gal. 3:27)
Washing of Water	Cleansed (Eph. 5:26)
Baptism	Working of God (Col. 2:12)
Baptism	Working of God (Col. 2:12)
Washing of Regeneration	Saved (Tit. 3:5)
Baptism	Saved (1 Pet. 3:21)

Conclusion

Even when one has done precisely as the Lord commands, *he has merited nothing; he has earned nothing*. The fact that we are saved by God's grace does not negate human responsibility in accepting Heaven's gift, and one's refusal to do what is clearly commanded by the Son of God, or to assign it a subordinate status, is not justified.

Those who speak in opposition to New Testament baptism, contradicting the sacred writings, will have a heavy judgment to bear.

Sources

Attwater, Donald (1961), *A Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan).

Lange, John Peter (1874), *The Gospel of John* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co.).

Robertson, A.T. (1931), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman), Vol. IV.

David J. Stewart says:

I spoke at length recently with a Church of God minister who earned his degree from the [Dallas Christian College](#). Dallas Christian College DOESN'T make it clear at all that they are indeed a *Church of Christ* college. Why are they deceptive about who they really are?

What are they afraid to tell people? Click on their "*Our Mission*" link and see if Church of Christ is mentioned. It is NOT! By all indications, many Christian people would ignorantly think this was a great college to attend, but it certainly is NOT! It looks innocent enough on the surface doesn't it? That's the disguise they want you to see.

I went to visit their website to read their statement of faith; as I suspected, it was vague. But as clever as the person tried to be who devised this statement of faith, it couldn't escape the discernment of a spirit-filled believer, knowledgeable in the Word of God. The following quote is taken from their statement of faith:

"...the Church of the New Testament ought everywhere to be restored with its divine plan of admission: faith, repentance, and baptism..."

Did you read that? Did you see the heresy? Is baptism necessary for admission into the Church? No sir! The very moment you trust Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, asking Him to forgive your sins and come into your heart, you have been born-again and are a member of the body of Christ. Any fool who tells you that you have to be baptized to become a member of the church is LYING to you! Isn't it something how misguided ministers will force you to get baptized to join THEIR church, but God accepts ANY repentant sinner into heaven.

MY ANSWER: David J. Stewart, (who does not consider himself a fool), says, "*Any fool who tells you that you have to be baptized to become a member of the church is LYING to you!*"

According to David, *Jesus* is a “fool” because it was *Him who commanded “baptism.”* (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). If it was not Jesus who *commanded* baptism in water, who did, Mr. Stewart? Who?

You, who are reading my rebuttal, Who are you following? Are you following 1) Jesus, 2) the Universalist, 3) the Atheist, 4) those promoting infant baptism, or 5) those promoting faith only? We can go to heaven only by following *what Jesus says* and not what man says. The following chart shows what the Lord has said and also the many ways that men have tried to change it. They have changed it every way possible to suit themselves. You put yourself in one of them and you will know exactly whom you are obeying, God or men (Acts 5:29). But be honest in your heart and be sincere.

- 1) **Jesus in Mark 16:16** says: Believe + Baptized = Saved
- 2) **Universalist** says: **Not** Believe + **Not** Baptized = Saved
- 3) **Atheist** says: Believe + Baptized = **Not** Saved
- 4) **Infant Baptism** says: **Not** Believe + Baptized = Saved
- 5) **Faith Only** says: Believe + **Not** Baptized = Saved

David J. Stewart (and others) choose number 5. Satan chooses numbers 2 to 5. *I choose number 1.* And you? It is very simple to make the right choice, but servants of Satan make it very hard on some people to obey God rather than men! Only one answer is right. If you choose number 5, then all the others are wrong, and that would mean that number 1 is wrong, too. And who said number 1? You know who said it, Mr. Stewart, **Jesus** said it. Was Jesus wrong and you are right or vice versa, Mr. Stewart and all those who agree with you and not with Jesus?

Satan does not want anyone to be baptized *for the purpose of being saved.* Satan tells people that after you *think* you are saved and your sins are forgiven *then* you can be baptized. But *this is a lie of Satan* which will cause many people to be lost. But Jesus promised salvation only to those *who repent, believe, confess Him as their Lord, and are baptized.* We cannot afford to be wrong on this vital point. Our eternal destiny depends on our being right with God. Are you ready to take that risk and obey men rather than God? The choice in our case is between obeying Mr. Stewart and obeying Jesus, not me, because *it was Jesus who commanded baptism* not me! The disagreement is not between Mr. Stewart and George Ebejer, but between Mr. Stewart and our Lord Jesus Christ. If someone wants to argue about this, he has to argue with Jesus and not with me. Jesus will listen to him. And I believe that Jesus’ answer will be: take My Word in your hands and read what I have said in **John 14:15, 21, 23, 24** and in **Matthew 7:21-27.** Jesus will answer him, “don’t you know that it is **I who**

commands baptism for the remission of sins and not men?” (Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Jesus will tell him, “Why do you prefer obeying men and not Me? Don’t you know that The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; **the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day**” (John 12:48). Are the words found in Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16 Jesus’ words?

In Matthew 21:23 we read, “And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, **By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?**”

The people asked two related questions in this text. They wanted to know *by what authority and who gave him this authority to do the things he was doing*. Jesus did not act like authority was a non-issue, that it wasn’t a big deal, it didn’t really matter. He did ask them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The **baptism** of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?” vs. 24-25a. Jesus is showing that **authority comes from either heaven or from men**. The **baptism** of John illustrates this point the Lord was making. These people would not give an answer to his simple question, for they would get themselves in trouble to answer either way, vs. 25b-27. *Of course if they had loved the truth, and wanted to do what was right, they could have answered it very easily*. The things we practice in religion, does the authority for them come from heaven or from men?

Question: Mr, Stewart (and all those who agree with you), the baptism of Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16, **is it from heaven or from men?** The answer is very simple if you are honest enough to give it, either from **heaven** or from **men**! You choose one and answer. Or you do not know?

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

You do NOT have to be affiliated with any church, religious group or denomination to go to Heaven. You just need Jesus! Jesus Himself proclaimed in John 14:6 that He is the ONLY way to God the Father. John 10:9 clearly declares that Jesus Christ is the DOOR by which men and women enter into Heaven. John 6:40 teaches that the will of God is **to believe** on Christ. Salvation is simple, we are the SINNERS and Jesus is the SAVIOR.

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart says: “You do NOT have to be affiliated with any church, religious group or denomination to go to Heaven.”

Is this Scriptural or another opinion of Mr. Stewart? It is true and I agree that you do NOT have to be affiliated with any, religious group or denomination to go to Heaven” but you need to be in Christ’s church, His

body, to go to heaven. Either Mr. Stewart does not read the New Testament or he wants to deceive his readers.

First, the Scriptures are quite precise in their affirmation that the “church” was in the mind of God from the very beginning. Note Paul’s testimony:

“... *to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known **through the church** the manifold wisdom of God, according to the **eternal purpose** which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11).*

Question: Mr. Stewart (and all those who agree with you), Was there salvation *outside* of the ark? Was there salvation outside of the nation of Israel? Is there salvation *outside* of the church of Christ? Do you agree with me, that the answer to all of these questions, according to the Bible, is clearly “*no, there was no salvation*”.

Let me be clear here, when I say the church of Christ I do not mean the Church of Christ that Mr. Stewart has in his mind. I am talking about the church that Christ Himself said that He will build and that He is the Head of it (**Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:18; Romans 16:16**). Mr. Stewart’s understanding of the church is not Scriptural because all he thinks of is in a denominational sense. Christ did not say “I will built my denomination” but “my church.” We are His church. Many sincere people are being deceived by such false presentations.

Do you agree, Mr. Stewart, that *salvation is in only one church*. Jesus said in **Matthew 22:29**, “*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*” Many “religious” people (and it seems that Mr. Stewart and others who agree with him are such) have formed their ideas about salvation on their own opinions, preconceptions, and statements that they have heard over and over rather than the Bible.

The Bible (not me) says that there is no salvation found outside of the church of Christ. The Apostle Paul said in **Colossians 1:18** that Jesus is the head *of the body, the church*. The body and the church are one and the same. Paul told the Ephesians, in **Ephesians 5:25**, “*..even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*” The church is singular in existence, and Jesus gave Himself for the church. In **Ephesians 5:23**, Paul said, “*...even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*” For a person to say that they can be saved without being a member of the church of Christ reveals *their ignorance of the Scripture*, because the Apostle Paul says that Christ is the “*saviour*” of the body, and the body is the church.

Now, which church was *the one church of the Bible*? It is, of course, the church that Jesus said that He will build (**Matthew 16:16**) and that was established on the Day of Pentecost, as written about in **Acts chapter two**. It is the church that Jesus bought with His own blood, **Acts 20:28**,

and it is the church governed by Jesus Christ, **Colossians 1:18**. So, according to Mr. Stewart, to be saved one has to obey him and not Jesus!

The church of our Lord began on the Day of Pentecost, and we can see that God added the “saved” to the church, as found in **Acts 2:47**. No church existed in the Bible prior to that day. In **Acts 2:38-47** Peter explained the terms of salvation and entrance into Christ’s one church. Peter preached to the entire house of Israel, **Acts 2:36**, but only 3,000 people gladly received his words and *were baptized*, simultaneously being added to the church of Christ by God Himself, as stated in **Acts 2:41-47**.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

As I spoke with this sincerely misguided minister, he explained the following order to me as being necessary for salvation:

1. HEAR
2. BELIEVE
3. REPENT
4. CONFESS
5. **BAPTISM (uh oh! This is damnable heresy!)**

Water baptism is NOT required for Biblical salvation!

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart says: “**BAPTISM (uh oh! This is damnable heresy!)**.”

What greater sin can there be than accusing our Lord with giving us a **damnable heresy?**

Let us see now the sincerity and honesty of Mr. Stewart and those who agree with him who accuse our Lord with giving us a **damnable heresy?**

Question: Water baptism, Mr. Stewart, and co., is it a COMMAND from Heaven or from men????

Please, show us all of you, who believe that “**BAPTISM (uh oh! This is damnable heresy!)**”, your honesty and sincerity if HEAVEN is giving us a **damnable heresy?** I am going to use the inspired words of Peter and John: “*Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord [who commanded, **uh oh! This is damnable heresy, BAPTISM**] if possible, *the intent of your heart may be forgiven you*” (Acts 8:22).*

The will of the Father includes our being baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, so that we can be saved and go to heaven. In **Mark 16:16** Jesus says, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.*” This is such a simple *command to obey* in the way the Lord says to do it. Notice the divine order: **1) Believe + 2)**

Baptism = 3) Saved. Jesus says that both belief *and* baptism are required to be saved. But men, like Mr. Stewart and others, at the prompting of Satan, are trying to tell us many other different things that are contrary to what Jesus says. Men have taken what the Lord said, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved,*” and have changed it in every way possible to suit themselves and have come to the fatal point of calling that command: “**BAPTISM (uh oh! This is damnable heresy!)**”

Yes, this sincerely misguided minister, who explained the following order to you as being necessary for salvation is right because what he explained is totally Scriptural:

1. HEAR **Romans 10:11-16**
2. BELIEVE **Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6**
3. REPENT **Luke 13:3; 24:47**
4. CONFESS **Romans 10:8-11**
- 5 **BAPTISM (uh oh! This is damnable heresy!) Matthew 28: 18-19; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16.**

At least the misguided minister is sincere and knows the Scriptures! Again, “*Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord [who commanded, uh oh! This is damnable heresy, BAPTISM] if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you*”

Again, as I have already said, Satan does not want anyone to be baptized for the purpose of being saved. Satan tells people that *after* you *think* you are saved and your sins are forgiven *then* you can be baptized. But this is a lie of Satan which will cause many people to be lost. Do you know what it means that you are saved BEFORE being baptized for the remission of sins? It means that you are saved with your sins. It means that, if the word “*for*” (Greek *eis*) means “because of”, as Mr. Stewart who wrongly believes so, then he is saying that Jesus shed His blood *because* people *already* had received their remission of their sins (**Matthew 26:28**). Truly Satan knows what he is doing!

But Jesus promised salvation only to those who do *all the steps shown above*. We cannot afford to be wrong on this vital point. Our eternal destiny depends on our being right with God.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

“Repentance” is “a change of mind,” not a change of lifestyle. You DON’T have to stop committing sins to be saved, you need to acknowledge your sinnership. Who can give up all their sins? No one! If all sins had to be forsaken for salvation, then NO one could be saved because we are all sinners (Romans 3:23). A changed life is the FRUIT of genuine repentance; and not a part of the ROOT of saving faith. A man’s faith is COUNTED for righteousness (Genesis 15:6; Romans 3:4-6).

MY ANSWER: Who said that “repentance is a change of lifestyle? You see, now, it is not “faith only” but we have “repentance,” too.

Jesus commands: “*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3).

Luke 24:47 – “*And that repentance and release from bondage of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*”

The original Greek for *release from bondage* of sin could be translated as *release from bondage, forgiveness, or remission*, of sin. *Release from bondage of sin* is far more accurate, and perfectly describes the purification necessary to avoid being banned from heaven. The cleansing of the Word, the cleansing in the Light, both attained by waiting on the Lord, listening, hearing, watching, and obeying – such cleansing is a release from the bondage of sin. Release from captivity, from the prison house, from the oppression, is what Christ said he came to do:

“*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach release to the captives [of sin], and recovery of sight to the blind, to deliver [free] those who are oppressed [by sin]*” (Luke 4:18-19).

“*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*” (Isaiah 61:1-2).

“*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:9).

“*And saying, Repent (think differently; change your mind, regretting your sins and changing your conduct), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” (Matthew 3:2).

“*But if a wicked man turns away from ALL the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.*” (Ezekiel 18:21)

According to Mr. Stewart, Ezekiel, who was inspired by God, (2 Tim. 3:16) is wrong because, Mr. Stewart says, “Who can give up all their sins? No one!” But Ezekiel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is what he said. It is good here to read Acts 5:29, Mr. Stewart and all those who agree with you.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23 that many who “confess” Him as Lord are not saved, because they have never done God’s will (which is to believe on Jesus, John 6:40).

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart says, “because they have never done God’s will (which is to believe on Jesus, John 6:40).”

Mr. Stewart, if he wants to be truly sincere, should have quoted Matthew 7:21 and not giving his opinion. Jesus says: “*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*”

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

“That **OBEY** Him” and not that *believe* Him! But according to Mr. Stewart, the inspired writer is mistaken, because he (Mr. Stewart) tries to deceive his readers by quoting *only a part* of Jesus’ words.

“*he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*”

But to leave the rest of Jesus words out is dishonesty, it is dishonesty and trying to deceive your readers. How Jesus ended His saying?

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

²⁵*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

²⁶*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and DOES NOT DO THEM, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.”*

Jesus did not say, “and *believe* them” but “**DOES THEM.**” Jesus did not say, “and does *not believe* them” but “**DOES NOT DO them.**” You see how a person can easily be deceived by men like Mr. Stewart who takes a verse (**John 6:40**) out of the New Testament context about salvation?

John 12:42-43 – “⁴²*Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*”

What we find here with these chief rulers is people who believe something but they are not willing to embrace what they believe for fear of the consequences. Let us first consider the weaknesses of their faith.

The chief rulers believes that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, because that is what the text is speaking about this point. Three years of ministry were now nearly complete. All the questions concerning Jesus had been asked, and the only one to be answered was, “*Is Jesus the Messiah, or not?*” Although this question had been answered in the negative by the Pharisees much earlier, now in the final hours we find that, “*many even of the chief rulers believed in him.*”

But there was a problem with the chief rulers. Although they *believed*, Jesus to be the Son of God, they lacked the courage to embrace Him, to defend Him, and to witness Him publicly.

Now, Mr. Stewart, who is trying to ridicule the minister of the church of Christ by applying to him different insulting adjectives, said, “Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21-23** that many who “confess” Him as Lord are not saved, because they have never done God’s will (**which is to believe on Jesus, John 6:40**), emphasis mine.

Now, were those authorities saved, Mr. Stewart and all those who agree with you? They BELIEVED IN JESUS. According to the false teaching of “salvation by faith only” they were saved. I do not marvel if you tell me that they were saved!

Acts 26:27-28 – “²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? **I know that you believe.**” ²⁸And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?”

Was King Agrippa saved? Or is Mr. Stewart going to say that the apostle Paul was wrong when he said, “**I know that you believe.**” I urge your readers to read **Ephesians 5:6** and the **Acts 5:29**.

James 1:23-25 – “²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a **doer**, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets **but a doer who acts**, he will be blessed in his doing.”

I do not think that Mr. Stewart has read these verses! DOER, DOER WHO ACTS!

It is a very very dangerous precedent, to quote a passage in support of your views, Mr. Stewart, when the meaning of the author (the Holy Spirit, in our case) who wrote it was different from that you attach to it. Yes, there will be many surprises at the judgment!

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

The wayward minister I witnessed to was adamant that water baptism is essential to salvation. This of course is a lie of the Devil. Though the man condemns Catholicism for their teaching of “works” salvation through the keeping of the Seven Sacraments, he is utterly blinded to his own foolish perceptions about baptism.

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart, now calls the sincere minister “the wayward minister” He truly seems to be authoritative. He seems to have the authority to judge others, too. But it is better for him to read carefully God’s Word to see what it says about those judging others. He calls water baptism as essential to salvation *a lie of the Devil*.

Question: Mr. Stewart, who commanded us to preach and teach that “¹⁶*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*” **Jesus or the Devil?**

Now, Mr. Stewart, prove to us your honesty and sincerity by giving us a simple clear answer: Jesus – Devil. WHO?

According to your accusations, your answer should be very simple, THE DEVIL. “³¹*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Hebrews 10:31) Mr. Stewart.

You accused the wayward minister by saying about him: “he is utterly blinded to his own foolish perceptions about baptism.” But why do you think that this cannot be applied to you, too, Mr. Stewart? Or you are the only theologian who has all authority on earth, even though it is Jesus’ **Matthew 28:18**, and even though in verse **19** He **COMMANDED BAPTISM TO BE PERFORMED IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**”? And you say that this command is of the Devil!! Again, “³¹*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” (Hebrews 10:31).

According to you, Mr. Stewart, it was the Devil, not the inspired Peter, who commanded Cornelius and his family “⁴⁸*And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.*” “HE COMMANDED.” You see, Mr. Stewart that baptism is a **command**, given, not by the devil, as you believe, but by an inspired apostle who received *the command to baptize directly from the Lord.*

John 12:48 – “⁴⁸*The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*”

Again, read **Ephesians 5:6**.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

I flat out asked him what would happen to a person who made it to step 4, but didn't get baptized at step 5? He honestly replied that he did NOT know! He stressed the fact that he felt SAFER by ADDING that extra step of baptism to his faith. Unfortunately, that is a sure road to hell-fire and destruction.

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." —Proverb 14:12

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart seems to believe that he is the supreme judge. We believe without doubt that “*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Mr. Stewart, humble yourself and let God be the judge and not you.

So I can ask Mr. Stewart what will happen if one is studying God's Word with all sincerity and honesty, he really wants to know the truth, but suddenly he has a heart attack and dies instantly without having the chance to believe and repent. Is he saved, or not? I can imagine what Mr. Stewart will answer. But if I give any answer to please some other persons, I will be taking the authority which is only Christ's and not mine. The Bible tells us what must we do to be saved. That is all the authority that we have to teach exactly what the Holy Spirit commands us to teach. Only God is the Great Judge. So,

“⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Question: When a person accepts to be baptized, is **he obeying Christ**?
Just a simple answer of Yes – No

We do not want your opinions! Are you ready to *destroy your arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*? Humility is very hard to do.

Yes, it is a good quote from **Proverbs 14:12**, and that verse can apply to all, even to Mr. Stewart. If we teach *our opinions*, instead of God's Word, then that verse applies to us all.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

Faith in Christ ALONE equals salvation!

Faith in Christ PLUS anything equals hell!

If I said that I believed I could trust you with my money, that would NOT be faith (that would be optimism). If I entrust you with my money and ask someone to follow you (to keep an eye on you), that is NOT faith either. If I entrust you with my money and don't take ANY precautions whatsoever, that is 100% faith. To add baptism to faith is to add a "work" to faith; consequently, it is NO faith at all. You don't need much faith to be saved, you need "just enough" faith. You need JUST ENOUGH faith to obey Romans 10:13 and "call upon the name of the Lord."

If you have faith even as small as a grain of mustard seed (a VERY small seed indeed), that is all the faith you need. The AMOUNT of one's faith is not of importance for salvation, what is important is that you simply HAVE FAITH. Either you have 100% faith or you do not.

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart has a habit of taking verses out of their context to prove his false teaching.

Question: Mr. Stewart, where in the whole New Testament do we find the phrase "*faith alone*"? Just give us the book, chapter, and verse. Don't

forget, “*faith alone*” and not “*by faith*” because “*by faith*” does not mean “*faith alone*.”

The phrase “*faith alone*” is found in the New Testament but I am sure that Mr. Stewart is not going to quote the book, chapter, and verse where it is found because it teaches *contrary* to what he is saying, that is, it teaches that “*faith only*” we are lost and not saved! We will see this later on. Maybe he will quote it and give us his *opinion* about it.

Mr. Stewart said: “You need JUST ENOUGH faith to obey **Romans 10:13** and “*call upon the name of the Lord.*” But you see what happens when one takes a verse (as did Mr. Stewart) out of its context? Is that all that Romans chapter 10 says? Another verse says, “¹⁷*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*” Is the Word of Christ only verse 13? So according to Mr. Stewart, one does not need to “repent” but ONLY to “*call upon the name of the Lord.*” Not even needs to have faith! We must “*live by every word that proceeds from God*” (**Matthew 4:4**), and not by one verse only taken out of its context.

Mr. Stewart said that when he asked flatly the minister of the church of Christ ‘what would happen to a person who made it to step 4, but didn't get baptized at step 5?’ He honestly replied that he did NOT know!

At least you know that he is *an honest man* because you yourself said it, “He *honestly* replied that he did NOT know!” Now let us see if you are honest as he is by giving us an honest answer to my question. All I want is book, chapter and verse. Maybe your answer will be the same as his, that is, I do NOT know!

Mr. Stewart says that “Faith in Christ ALONE equals salvation!” He also says that “Faith in Christ PLUS anything equals hell! That is not what the Bible says. We will wait until he gives us the answer to the question above.

Now let us see if “Faith in Christ PLUS anything equals hell!”

Romans 8:24 – “²⁴*For in this hope we were saved....*”

So now we have, faith plus hope equal salvation. Do you agree, Mr. Stewart and all those who agree with you?

Ephesians 2:5 – “*...by grace you have been saved.*”

faith, hope and grace = salvation

2 Peter 3:15 – “¹⁵*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation,...*”

faith, hope, grace and patience = salvation

Romans 5:9 – “⁹*Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*

faith, hope, grace and patience, blood = salvation

Romans 1:16 – “¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, for **it is the power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

faith, hope, grace and patience, blood, and the gospel = salvation

James 1:21 – “...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

faith, hope, grace, patience, blood, gospel and the word = salvation

Romans 10:13 – “¹³For “**whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.**”

faith, hope, grace and patience, blood, gospel, word, and calling on the name of the Lord = salvation

Luke 13:3 – “³ I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** you will all likewise perish.”

faith, hope, grace and patience, blood, gospel, word, calling on the name of the Lord, and repentance = salvation

Mark 16:16 – “¹⁶He who believes and is **baptized will be saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

faith, hope, grace and patience, blood, gospel, word, calling on the name of the Lord, repentance, and baptism = salvation

Hebrews 5:9 – “⁹And having been perfected, He became **the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.**”

faith, hope, grace and patience, blood, word, gospel, calling on the name of the Lord, repentance, baptism, and obedience = salvation

James 2:21-24 – “²¹Was not Abraham our father **justified by works** when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²²Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and **by works faith was made perfect**? ²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see then that a man is **justified by works, and not by faith only.**”

faith, hope, grace and patience, blood, word, gospel, calling on the name of the Lord, repentance, baptism, obedience and works = salvation

Did you notice what James says here about “faith only”? “You see then that a man is justified by works, **and not by faith only.**”

So, according to Mr. Stewart, all these Scriptures (and a lot of others) **together with faith will send us to hell** instead of to Heaven!

Mr. Stewart, please read **Acts 8:22-23** – “²²Repent therefore of this your wickedness, **and pray God** if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”

Now, whom do you choose to believe, the inspired James (and the other inspired writers), or Mr. Stewart. Both do not agree, in fact, they are diametrically opposed to each other.

Inspiration says, “*a man is justified by works, and not by faith only*” and Mr. Stewart says that “*a man is NOT justified by works, but by faith only.*” Now read **Acts 5:29** and obey it.

I can continue quoting Scriptures that show that we are not saved by faith only but if one is truly honest and sincere these should be enough to make him realize how wrong and fatal is the teaching of salvation by faith only.

Now, let me show your readers, Mr. Stewart and all those who agree with you, how mistaken you are by teaching that *baptism is a work of men.*

First, we must consider what the definition of a “work” is that we are using. If one defines baptism a “work” then we must also label *believing* a “work”. We must also label *repenting* a “work”. *Believing* and *repenting* are both things we *must DO* as a prerequisite to salvation. They are both things that require human *action*. Baptism is merely the last part of that equation. James tells us he will show us his faith by what he *does*. “*Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself.*” (**James 2:17**) Very simple and very clear words.

It must be remembered that although baptism is something we must *do* (like believing and repenting), baptism is an **act of faith**, not a “work.” It must also be noted that the one at “work” when we are baptized is **God**, not us. See **Colossians 2:12**. Just as we must report to the hospital before a surgeon can operate on us, so too, we must “report to God” in the waters of baptism, submitting to God and claiming His promise so that our sins will be forgiven. *Just as it is the surgeon who is the one who is at work when we are operated on, so too, it is God who is the one who is at work when we undergo baptism.*

The Bible teaches that water baptism:

- 1). It is obeyed to be saved – (**Mark 16:16**).
- 2). It is for the remission of sins – (**Acts 2:38**).
- 3). It is into Christ – (**Romans 6:3**).
- 4). It is into Christ’s death – (**Romans 6:4**).
- 5). It is into the one body – (**1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:13-16**).
- 6). It is how one puts on Christ – (**Galatians 3:26-27**).
- 7). It saves one – (**1 Peter 3:20-21**).
- 8). It washes away sins – (**Acts 22:16**).
- 9). It is the washing of regeneration – (**Titus 3:5**).
- 10). It is the final act of the “new birth” – (**John 3:3-5**).
- 11). It is essential to conversion – (**Acts 3:19**).

Well now, just look at all the people who haven't been baptized and who do not believe what the Bible teaches about water baptism! What about them? They have no excuse. The Bible is clear, it is up to them to choose whom they will obey, God or men? I want to make this clear. If one says that he/she was baptized but believes that he/she was saved *before* being baptized, then all that he/she has done was getting wet with water. So better to read **Acts 5:29**.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

The Church of Christ minister I was speaking with told me that he felt much safer by adding that extra step of baptism to his faith and repentance. How stupid! How foolish! How woefully ignorant is he of the Word of God. The Apostle Paul in 1st Corinthians 1:17 declared...

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel..." —1st Corinthians 1:17

According to the Church of Christ minister, Paul was sent by Christ to TEACH the gospel, but not to actually do any of the REQUIRED baptism to be saved. He claims this was done to prevent division in the church. True, Paul didn't want to baptize any of them because of their immature quarrelling; however, this had absolutely nothing to do with their salvation. Some of the believers in the Corinthian church were actually fighting over who baptized them. They were making an issue of a non-issue. Paul lays the issue to rest by proclaiming that CHRIST did NOT send him to baptize, but to preach the gospel. It is our FAITH in the gospel of Jesus that saves us, NOT baptism.

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart calls what the church of Christ minister (and us) believe about baptism: "How *stupid!* How *foolish!* How *woefully ignorant* is he of the Word of God. The Apostle Paul in **1st Corinthians 1:17** declared..."

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel..." —1st Corinthians 1:17

Question: Mr. Stewart again fell in the snare of Satan. Taking a verse out of its context. He quotes only the verse that he thinks he can deceive his readers with. Remember that even Satan quoted the Scriptures out of their context to try to deceive Jesus (see **Matthew 4:5-6**).

Did Paul baptize? *Yes, he did baptize.* Did he disobey Christ? Please answer Mr. Stewart, did Paul disobeyed Christ, if Christ did not sent him to baptize?

1 Corinthians 1:14-17 – ¹⁴*I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵lest anyone should say [the reason] that I had baptized in my own name. ¹⁶ Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, [is there a contradiction here?] but to*

preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”

Did not the “Great Commission” apply to Paul who was chosen last as an apostle to the Gentiles (**Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16**)?

What is Paul really saying in that statement “*Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach...*”? Only that he didn’t personally have to do the act of baptizing, others could do that. The *reason* he was glad he had not personally baptized very many was because at Corinth some were taking the name of the one who had baptized them into Christ and this was promoting division.

Read the whole context (**1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3**).

In **1 Corinthians 1:10ff**, Paul condemns the Christians at Corinth for their division. Apparently many were holding an improper allegiance to the one who baptized them (**verse 12**). In **verse 14**, Paul stated that he was therefore thankful that *he had baptized only a few* there in Corinth. He did not seek any particular status in the minds of those who were baptized; **it made no difference to him who actually did the baptizing**. He says in **verse 17** and in **Acts 9:15** that Jesus had called him to **preach**. **Others could do the baptizing as well as Paul, but not necessarily the preaching**. Remember **John 4:1-2** says that *Jesus made and baptized many disciples*, but it was His disciples that actually did the physical act of baptizing.

Was Paul saying that baptism is not important? **Certainly not. Remember it was Paul who said that we put on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27)**. Actually, the passage is very consistent in showing that baptism is very important. It is obvious that the Christians in Corinth had been baptized; this is inferred in 1 Corinthians 1:13 and stated in Acts 18:8. **And Paul, in this passage, actually indicates that two things are required before a person may call himself after another person. First, Paul would have to die for that person; and second, that person would have to be baptized in the name of Paul**. This actually parallels perfectly with Biblical teaching that Christ has died for us, and we right-fully call ourselves Christians when we put Christ on in baptism.

The divisions that were occurring with the Corinthians apparently got started because they were placing improper importance and significance on **who** baptized them. Whether it was Paul or some other teacher, it did not matter.

But notice something very important about Paul’s words that actually demonstrate the necessity of baptism:

To re-state, according to **verse 13**, in order to be called after Christ, at least two things must happen:

1. Christ must die for that person (which He did)
2. That person must be **baptized** into the name of Christ!

If one has not been baptized into Christ, one cannot rightfully call themselves a Christian.

Even though Paul may have only baptized a few of the Corinthians himself, personally, they **ALL were** baptized!

1 Corinthians 12:13 – “For we were ALL **baptized** by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

For additional consideration: When Paul says, “*Not* to baptize *but* to preach the gospel,” he is using a common element of Greek syntax, the “*ou . . . alla* (not . . . but) construction. There are a number of places in the NT where *not...but* does not negate one of the two items under consideration. *Instead, it prioritizes them.* For example, Peter tells Ananias, “You have *not* lied to men *but to God*. Of course He had lied to men, but most importantly he had lied to God.

In a similar way Paul is saying, “*I came first and most importantly to preach the gospel, then to Baptize.*” This further emphasizes that faith and repentance are to precede baptism.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

I could go on and on about why baptism is NOT necessary for salvation. No one in the Old Testament was ever baptized. These people who claim that the Old Testament is invalid are idiots. Of course, the law which was against us was indeed nailed to the cross. Yes, the Jewish ceremonial laws are gone. However, we are still expected by God to obey the Nine Commandments (NOT to be saved, but because we are saved and love Jesus). People in the Old Testament (old contract) were saved the SAME way people are saved today, BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS (Ephesians 2:8, 9). There is NO other way to be saved! It's Jesus or hell, turn or burn friend!

MY ANSWER: Mr. Stewart said that he “could go on and on about why baptism is NOT necessary for salvation.” How can he go on if *he did not even has started*? All the examples he brought were either taking verses out of their context or had nothing to do with baptism.

He said that “No one in the Old Testament was ever baptized.” Truly, Mr. Stewart does not read his Bible. He wants his readers to believe what he thinks and his opinions and not what the Bible really says, and sometimes he succeeds. Many sincere people are being caught in that fatal teaching.

First of all, how can those in the Old Testament be buried with Christ in baptism and raised with Him if Christ was not yet buried and raised?

Now to the Old Testament times.

First of all, Mr. Stewart, before he makes any assumptions of his, he ought to place himself in the shoes of those who lived in biblical times, if he really wants to know the truth and stop from continuing deceiving his readers. I believe it is correct to say that if we do not understand the Scriptures *in their historical context*, it will not be possible for us to make proper applications to ourselves today. Unfortunately, that is why Mr. Stewart is speaking the way he is speaking, because he does not understand the Scriptures in their historical context but only according to his opinions.

We often ask the question or are asked the question: “why baptism?” “Why did **God choose baptism** as the way for us to be in contact with the blood of Christ?” Too, Mr. Stewart makes the false accusation on us that we are **ADDING** baptism by saying that we, “most definitely demand that **BAPTISM** be added for one to be saved.” If he is truly honest and want to please the Lord and not himself, is he ready to give us an honest, sincere answer to this simple question: “**WHO COMMANDED BAPTISM?**” How can we add baptism for one to be saved *if the command to be baptized was the Lord’s command and not ours?* It is the Lord who adds baptism to belief, repentance, and confession and not us, Mr. Stewart, and you perfectly know this but you prefer to obey men rather than God! **WE** do not obey Luther, Calvin or someone else but only our Lord.

Frequently we turn to Romans 6 and point out that baptism unites us in the death and the resurrection of Jesus. This, of course, is absolutely true. But Paul’s letter to the Romans is considered to be penned around 57 A.D. Are we to suppose that until 57 A.D. no one had any idea why baptism was the chosen mechanism to receive God’s grace? When Peter stood up with the eleven in Acts 2 and command the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins, should we suppose the people looked around at each other wondering what baptism was? Did they say to each other, “we need to build some baptisteries?” Or, to put the questions another way, was the **command** for baptism something completely new and shocking to the audience of the first century which required Paul’s explanation in Romans 6 or did the people already have an understanding of baptism?

We can also go one step further. Archaeology is continuing to excavate numerous amounts of pools in the city of Jerusalem. Even from reading the scriptures we are able to know about a few of the pools that existing in Jerusalem in the first century. In John 9 we read about the pool of Siloam that the blind man was commanded to use to wash mud from his eyes and be healed from blindness. We also read in John 5 about the pool in Bethesda where the waters were troubled by an angel and the first person into the waters would be *healed* of their illness. Numerous pools are being found throughout the city. Perhaps baptism was a new concept to John the

Baptist and the teachings of Jesus as we may think, and this is being clearly shown by the attitude of Mr. Stewart toward baptism.

I. Baptism in the Old Testament

A. Ritual washings

1. It is important for us to realize that ceremonial washings were a critical part of the Old Testament law. We spend much of our time learning about the sacrificial system that was instituted under the law of Moses. But we can easily forget that ritual washings were an integral part of God's commands. Let us look at some of God's commands to get a feel and better understanding of the ritual washings commanded by God.
2. In **Leviticus 14-17** we see the regulations given by God describing when one was deemed unclean by God and what was necessary to do to no longer be unclean. In **Leviticus 14** God gives the regulations concerning skin diseases. *"The one who is to be cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and **bathe** with water; he is clean. Afterwards he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent for seven days. He is to shave off all his hair again on the seventh day: his head, his beard, his eyebrows, and the rest of his hair. He is to wash his clothes and **bathe himself with water**; he is clean"*(**Lev. 14:8-9**). We will notice the same commands given to make a person clean: wash the clothes and wash himself in water.
3. **Leviticus 15** is God's discussion concerning bodily fluids. *"When the man with the discharge has been cured of it, he is to count seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and **bathe his body in fresh water**; he will be clean"* (**Lev. 15:13**).
4. In **Leviticus 17** God dealt with forbidden sacrifices and the eating of blood and dead animals. *"Every person, whether the native or the foreigner, who eats an animal that died a natural death or was mauled by wild beasts is to wash his clothes and **bathe with water**, and he will remain unclean until evening; he will be clean. But if he does not wash his clothes and **bathe himself**, he will bear his punishment"* (**Lev. 17:15-16**).
5. In **Leviticus 16** God gave regulations concerning the day of atonement. The day of atonement was a very special and sacred day when the high priest was allowed to enter into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and sprinkle blood upon the cover of the ark of the covenant to atone for the sins of the people.
6. *"Then Aaron is to enter the tent of meeting, take off the linen garments he wore when he entered the most holy place, and leave them there. He will **bathe his body with water in a holy place** and put on his clothes. Then he must go out and sacrifice his burnt offering and the*

*people's burnt offering; he will make atonement for himself and for the people. He is to burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. The man who released the goat as the scapegoat is to wash his clothes and **bathe his body with water**; afterwards he may re-enter the camp. The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought into the most holy place to make atonement, must be brought outside the camp and their hide, flesh, and dung burned up. The one who burns them is to wash his clothes and **bathe himself with water**; afterwards he may re-enter the camp" (Lev. 16:23-28).* Even on the important day of atonement, the washing of the clothes and *immersion of the body* was tied closely with the sacrifice of atonement. We see similar commands throughout this section of Leviticus and in the book of Numbers (**Numbers 19:19**).

B. Ritual washings and baptism

1. Now, you may be asking *what these ritual washings have to do with baptism*. The New Testament comments on these ritual washings that were performed under the old covenant. The writer of Hebrews speaks about the day of atonement and these washings which the people did.
2. *"These things having been set up this way, the priests enter the first room repeatedly, performing their ministry. But the high priest alone enters the second room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was making it clear that the way into the holy of holies had not yet been disclosed while the first tabernacle was still standing. This is a symbol for the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the worshiper's conscience. They are physical regulations and only deal with food, drink, and various **washings** imposed until the time of restoration" (Heb. 9:6-10).*
3. The word for "*washings*" at the end of verse 10 is the Greek word *baptismos*. The Jews did not understand these washings to be the taking out of a scrub brush and taking filth off the body. Nor did they understand these washings to be a simple sprinkling of water. The Jews believed that *immersion in water was necessary* and that the water much touch every part of the body to become ritually clean (Science & the Bible; National Geographic Channel). This explains why Jerusalem had so many pools available to the people.
4. But there is even more. The Jews went beyond the teachings of Moses concerning ritual washings and required those who converted to Judaism to also be immersed in water. "For the Jews required three things of strangers who declared themselves to be converts to the Law of Moses: circumcision, baptism, and to offer sacrifice if they were men: the two latter if they were women" ("baptism," International

Standard Bible Encyclopaedia). We have usually recognized the need for converts to Judaism to be circumcised if they were males. But *immersion* and sacrifice were also needed to be part of Judaism. This also explains why there were so many pools in Jerusalem in the early centuries. Therefore we see that the Jews were very familiar with the need *to be immersed in water*. I hope that Mr. David J. Stewart will change his mind now about what his false idea that, and I quote him, “No one in the Old Testament was ever baptized.”

5. But Gentiles were also familiar with this and would not have seen immersion as a foreign concept. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia further states, “Baptism, as an initiatory rite, was no less familiar to Gentile converts who had no acquaintance with the Jewish religion. These heathen baptisms, like the baptism of proselytes, were for the most part simply ceremonial purifications...” (ibid). We see that *immersion in water* was not a new concept being taught in the New Testament. In fact, not only the Jews but also the Gentiles knew the reasoning and purpose for being immersed in water. *Immersion was done for purification or to be ceremonially cleansed.*

C. Old Testament prophecies

1. The Old Testament prophets also spoke of *washing in water* with a similar understanding. The prophets used the people’s knowledge of ceremonial cleanliness before God as a way to symbolize the people needing to cleanse their hearts from sin. The external act of immersion symbolized the cleansing taking place as the worshipper was unclean but now was made clean in the sight of God.
2. In the first **15 verses of Isaiah 1**, Isaiah condemns the people for their wickedness. The people were full of injustice, bloodshed, and iniquity. Isaiah then declared, “***Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil***” (**Isaiah 1:16**).
3. In speaking in Messianic language about what would come with the Christ, Zechariah prophesied: “*On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the residents of Jerusalem, to wash away sin and impurity*” (**Zechariah 13:1**). Zechariah prophesied to the people telling them they needed to look forward to the day of the Messiah when a **washing away of sin** and impurity would take place. This picture would make perfect sense to the people of Israel. The blood of bulls and goats was not taking away sins. The ceremonial washings were simply symbols of a greater reality that was to come (**Hebrews 9:10**). Israel was awaiting the Messiah who would bring the reality.

II. Baptism in the New Testament

A. John the Baptist

1. As we come to the New Testament, we read about a man named John who was given an important task of preaching that the kingdom of heaven was near. *“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Wilderness of Judea and saying, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said: A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!” John himself had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were flocking to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to the place of his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” (Matt. 3:1-7).*
2. The message of John was that all Jews had to be purified to be ready for the coming Messianic kingdom. I think this helps us better understand the nature of John’s baptism. *John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance*, as Paul declares in **Acts 19**, in that it was to get people’s lives right for the coming Messiah. But the scriptures also tell us that *John’s baptism was for the forgiveness of sins*. We should not be thrown off by this, seeing that these ceremonial washings were always considered *the way that God made a worshipper clean who was unclean*.
3. *Those coming to John would not have thought that there was magic in the Jordan River that would take away their sins. They realized this was a symbolic act of their hearts turning to God and away from their wickedness*. This explains why John condemns the Pharisees and Sadducees for coming to him. John seems to indicate that these were hypocrites who had not come *with a change of heart* (and not lifestyle, as Mr. Stewart tried to deceive his readers about what we believe about repentance) *and desire for purification*.
4. In fact, the people of Israel were expecting *immersion in water* as a sign of the Messianic age. *“So they asked him, ‘Why then do you baptize if you aren’t the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?’” (John 1:25)*. Immersion in water was not a shocking new teaching but was expected by the people. *The Messianic age would require the people to ask God for cleansing through baptism*.

B. Other NT passages

1. I believe this background also explains the language the apostles used in describing the nature and working of baptism. Peter stood up in **Acts 2** and did not say something that the people had never heard of, that is, *immersion in water is needed for cleansing*. What was new was the fact that Jesus was the Messiah and ***it was through His power that sins were now taken away***. The day had come where the Messiah would remove sins forever when a person desired to be purified ***and was immersed in water***.
2. In **Acts 22:16** Ananias told Paul, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” Baptism was the way to be made clean **by God**. Ananias declares Paul’s need to be baptized ***to wash away his sins***.
3. Notice how the writer of Hebrews draws strongly on the ritual washings of the Old Testament and applies it to the act of baptism under the covenant of Jesus. “*Therefore, brothers, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He has inaugurated for us, through the veil (that is, His flesh); and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water*” (**Heb. 10:19-22**). ***This is exactly what was commanded under the old covenant to the high priest on behalf of the worshippers***. But that was only a symbol of the future reality that the Messiah would bring to the world. *The atoning work of Christ is tied to our need to have our hearts cleansed and our bodies washed in water, that is baptism*.
4. Paul described baptism in a similar way: “*Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be deceived: no sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, or swindlers will inherit God’s kingdom. Some of you were like this; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*” (**1 Cor. 6:9-11**). Again, *we are now able to understand why baptism is called a washing many times throughout the New Testament*. The image calls upon God taking unclean people and making them clean through immersion in water.
5. Hear Paul’s words again: “*But when the kindness of God our Saviour and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our*

Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7).

6. The symbolism is similar to the Old Testament picture. *God declared his people clean when they washed their clothes and washed their bodies in water. It was at that point they were made clean. If they did not perform this act they were not made clean: “But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe himself, he will bear his punishment” (Lev. 17:16).* It was still **God’s word to declare the people clean**, but they had to perform the act for God to make the declaration.
7. Paul said the same thing. God saved us by His own mercy and love and not by any works we have done. But God saves us “*through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*” The washing cannot be taken away for it is the point that God declares His people clean. The teaching of John, Jesus, and the apostles was not surprising to first century Jews nor Gentiles because *washing in water has always been considered the way to be made clean.* It is through the act of *immersion in water that God extends his grace to mankind.*

It is very easy to say: No one in the Old Testament was ever baptized. I doubt if Mr. Stewart knows what Scriptural baptism is. But mere inability to grasp a fact is no argument against its reality.

New Testament baptism is not a work of men, but it is **THE WORKING OF GOD**. “¹²*having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12).*

Mr. Stewart, again calls other human beings, who do not agree with his false teaching, **idiots**, and I am one of them according to him. These people who claim that the Old Testament is invalid are **idiots**. The meaning of the word “idiot” is “a foolish stupid senseless person.” What kind of love he has toward his neighbours. What a good example he is giving to his readers! Jesus tells us, “*Do to others what you would have them do to you*” (Matthew 7:12). Do you want, Mr. David, that others call you “idiot”? Jesus tells us, too, “*...whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire*” (Matt. 5:22). Do you believe in hell of fire, Mr. Stewart. I truly believe. But either you do not believe in it or you are not reading your Bible properly! Please read again **Acts 8:22-23**. **Are you ready to ask the wayward minister his forgiveness? I doubt!**

Then he continues to say: “Of course, the law which was against us was indeed nailed to the cross.” But I do not think that he knows the meaning of what he said. Now let me show how wrong Mr. Stewart is about the Old Testament. This is what we believe about the Old Testament Scriptures.

We have profound respect for the inspired writings of the Bible. All scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

One matter of concern, however, is the relation of the Old Testament to the church today. Let us see this point both negatively and positively.

I. The Old Testament is not the law for the church.

Jewish sympathizers sought to bind the Old Testament on the church in the days of Paul (**Galatians 5:1-29; Galatians 2:1-5**). Modern day religious groups seek to bind parts of the Old Testament on Christians, i.e., Seventh Day Adventists, Roman Catholics (I was a Roman Catholic before) etc. Various people have lingering questions and concerns about the matter of how we relate to the Old Testament.

The following truths make it clear that the people of God are not under the authority of the Old Testament today.

1. The Old Testament law was given to a specific group of people, the Jews, and was never said to have been given to anyone else, Christians included. God said to Moses, “...*I have made a covenant with thee, and with Israel*” (**Exodus 34:27**). The “*children of Israel*” were “*to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations*” as a sign between “*me (God) and the children of Israel forever*” (**Ex. 31:16-17**). God made the Mosaic covenant with the Jews of Moses' day, not with others (**Deuteronomy 5:1-3; Nehemiah 9:13-14**)

2. The Old Testament law was only temporary and was, consequently, to come to an end. Jeremiah foretold this fact and the Hebrew writer declared its fulfilment (**Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13**). God indicated that a new covenant, different from the covenant through Moses, was to be given; the Hebrew writer set forth its accomplishment. He then explained that in his day the old was “*ready to vanish away*” (**Heb. 8:13**) and that indeed “*there is made of necessity a change of the law*” (**Heb. 7:12**).

3. The Old Testament law was nailed to the cross of Christ and thereby was brought to an end as a law to guide God's people. Paul declared that Christians are “*dead to the law by the body of Christ*” and that this law was the law which said, “*Thou shalt not covet*”, i.e. the ten commandments law (**Romans 7:4, 7**). Elsewhere, Paul indicated that the veil which was “*untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament ... is done away in Christ*,” the reason being it was “*done away*” (**2 Corinthians 3:14,11**). Christ “*abolished in his flesh ... the law of commandments by the cross*” (**Ephesians 2:15-16**). In fact, he was said to have removed the “*handwriting of ordinances by nailing it to his cross*” (**Colossians 2:14**).

The result is, then, that the Old Testament as a law for God's people was removed by the death of Christ. Christians, therefore, are not to observe the Old Testament as the law for God's service today.

II. The Old Testament, though not the regulative will of God today, is still of much practical value for the Christian.

Two valuable passages on the usefulness of the Old Testament are **Romans 15:4** and **I Cor. 10:11**. These verses show that the Old Testament has value for our “*learning*,” “*admonition*,” and “*patience and comfort*.”

1. The Old Testament supplies much material for our learning. This relates to: (a) Fundamental questions such as the origin of the world (**Genesis 1:1**; **Psalms 33:6, 9**), the origin and nature of man (**Genesis 2:7**, **Zechariah 12:1**), the origin of sin (**Gen. 3:1-6**) and the beginning of the Hebrew nation (**Gen. 12:1-3**); (b) Essential information for the understanding of the New Testament such as the history of the Jewish people from Abraham to the end of the Old Testament; the understanding of Jewish events and activities mentioned in the New Testament, i.e., Passover, Pentecost, Sabbath, shedding of blood, etc; biographical allusions in the N.T. to O.T. people i.e., Elijah (**Matthew 17:1-9**), Moses (**John 1:17**), Adam and Eve (**1 Timothy 2:12-15**), etc.; and background for geographical allusions such as Jerusalem, Jordan, Samaria, etc. These bits and pieces of Old Testament allusion in the New Testament are better understood by a knowledge of the Old Testament. (c) Important information about Jesus and his way of life such as his genealogy (**Matt. 1**; **Luke 3**), the prophecies which pointed to his coming (**Psalms 16:8-10**; **Isaiah 53**, etc.), the failure of the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (**Heb. 10:1-2**), and various essential words such as sin, righteousness, holiness, prayer, etc. Thus, the understanding of Jesus and his way is aided by the “learning” of the Old Testament.

2. The Old Testament supplies many admonitions for guiding and warning man. These include: (a) Admonitions concerning man’s weakness such as the control of the heart (**Proverbs 4:23**), the danger of jealousy (**Prov. 6:34-35**) and of covetousness (**Ex. 20:17**; **Joshua 7:1ff**), and the “*deadly sins*” (**Prov. 6:16-19**). (b) Admonitions which show the need to obey God such as the examples of obedience in **Hebrews 11**, Joshua at Jericho, Naaman, Noah, etc. (c) Admonitions concerning the meaning and punishment of unrighteousness such as the sin of David (**2 Samuel 11**; **Psalms 51**), of Saul (**1 Sam. 15**), of Nadab and Abihu (**Leviticus 10**), and of Balaam (**Numbers 22**). These admonitions, by precept and example, show the need of proper service and character for God’s people.

3. The Old Testament provides for our patience and comfort in various ways. There are excellent readings which tell of God’s care and keeping of his people (**Psalms 23:27**; **103**; **121**, etc.) Also, there are examples of his keeping of his servants such as Job (Book of Job), David (**Psalms 37:25-26**), and Joshua (**Josh. 1:5-9**). In addition, the care God provided for the Jewish nation, in spite of its frequent failings and sins, serves to show his interest and provision for us today.

The Old Testament, then, should not be regarded as the Law of God's people today since *as a law it served its purpose, was fulfilled, and removed from authoritativeness by the death of Christ*. The Old Testament, however, should be treasured as an inspired book from God which supplies means of our learning, admonition, patience and comfort.

We obey the Nine Commandments because they were repeated in the New Testament, that is why.

Mr. David J. Stewart says that "People in the Old Testament (old contract) were saved the SAME way people are saved today, BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS (Ephesians 2:8, 9). There is NO other way to be saved! It's Jesus or hell, turn or burn friend!"

But is that all? Let us see what the bible says about salvation by grace.

Conditional Grace

The reception of God's grace is **conditional**. Calvinism (and Mr. Stewart) erroneously asserts that grace is bestowed unconditionally by the sovereign will of God. The Bible negates this concept.

The principle is illustrated by the example of Noah, who "*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*" (**Genesis 6:8**); and yet, as the writer of Hebrews shows, the patriarch and his family were saved by preparing an ark in obedience to God's instruction (**11:7**; cf. **Genesis 6:22**). God proffered the grace. Noah, by faith, *obeyed* the Lord, and so was blessed. While God extends grace, human beings must be willing to "receive" the favour (**2 Corinthians 6:1**).

Grace Is Not Earned

Grace excludes merit. We must constantly remind ourselves that humanity *is not deserving of salvation*. No one can "earn" pardon by works of human merit. If such were the case, we could boast regarding our redemption; however, that is impossible (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

Even if one were able to perform everything God commands, he still must regard himself as an "unprofitable servant" (**Luke 17:10**). Jesus taught that our sins have put us head-over-heels in debt, and no person has the innate ability to liquidate that obligation (cf. **Matthew 18:24-27**).

When this concept is truly grasped, service to Almighty God will flow with a freshness and zeal that invigorates the soul. Doubtless a failure to fathom the true significance of grace is the reason many church members are spiritually lethargic.

Accessing Grace

Grace is accessed initially at the point of *gospel obedience*. It is shocking that so many sincere people are unaware of the fact that "*grace*" and "*obedience*" are not enemies. Paul affirmed that grace is accessed by faith

(**Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:8-9**). It is not, however, a faith void of loving response to God; it is a faith that acts (**James 2:21-26**).

Consider this fact. In **Ephesians 2:8**, the apostle states that one is “*saved by grace through faith*.” Later, in the same document, he says that sinners are “*cleansed by the washing of water with the word*” (**5:26**). “*Saved*” and “*cleansed*” represent the same idea. Further, scholars almost universally acknowledge that the “*washing*” is an allusion to baptism. It is clear, therefore, that the reception of grace, by means of the “*faith*” system, includes immersion in water.

Again, note that eternal life is the result of grace (cf. “*grace of life*,” **1 Peter 3:7**, i.e., life resulting from grace). But one experiences that “*life*” when he is raised from the water of immersion (**Romans 6:4**). Heaven’s grace plan system includes *obedience*.

To express the matter another way, Christ “*saves us, through the washing of regeneration [acknowledged to be a reference to baptism], and the renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (**Titus 3:5**). Yet this is equivalent to being “**justified by his grace**” (v. 7). Obedience and grace do not stand in opposition to one another.

Continuing in Grace

The state of grace must be embraced continuously; otherwise one will fall from divine favour, and his initial reception of Heaven’s grace will have been “*in vain*” (**2 Corinthians 6:1**; cf. **1 Corinthians 15:10**).

It is incredible that many, who identify themselves with Christianity, should contend that it is impossible for the Christian to fall from God’s grace.

If one cannot fall out of grace, why did Paul urge his fellow-believers to “*continue [present tense — sustained perseverance] in the grace of God*” (**Acts 13:43**)? The Scriptures warn of certain Christians who attempted to revert to the Mosaic regime for salvation. As a result, they were “*severed from Christ*” and “*fallen away from grace*” (**Galatians 3:26-27; 5:4**). But it seems that Mr. Stewart does not know these things.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

Don't let some misguided individual trick you into believing that baptism is essential for salvation. The Church of Christ minister claimed that since the New Testament didn't actually begin until Jesus died, that the thief on the cross didn't have to be baptized. He is trying to say that there are TWO different plans of salvation (one for the OT and one for the NT). He believes that water baptism was NOT required for Old Testament saints, but IS required for all New Testament saints. This is ludicrous and preposterous!!!! There is NO such teaching in the Bible. There has always been ONE and only one plan of salvation, and that is through the precious shed blood of

our Dear Lord Jesus Christ! The Bible plainly teaches that Old Testaments saints were saved the same as New Testament saints...

Acts 10:43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Do you want to be saved? Then look upon Jesus! **Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."**

MY ANSWER: Always the same argument, *the thief on the cross*.

Question: Mr. Stewart, now be honest and answer my question. "Show me **were** the Bible says that the thief on the cross **WAS NOT** baptized? Book, chapter and verse, please." You have the chance to prove us wrong now!

If you give the *book, chapter and verse, were it says that the thief was not baptized, then, yes*, I agree with you not to let some misguided individual trick me into believing that baptism is essential for salvation. But I hope that it is not you who is misguided and trying to trick your readers into believing that baptism is NOT essential to salvation! You have the chance to prove yourself honest and sincere! Just *book, chapter and verse*, please.

Multitudes had been baptized by John the Baptist and by Jesus' disciples: "*Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. (Matt. 3:5, 6; John 4:1, 2)*. It is entirely possible that the thief was baptized and then later fell into sin. In this case, he would be an erring child of God not in need of baptism like an alien sinner. We cannot argue this is a case of salvation without baptism *unless we know the person was not baptized*. Maybe Mr. Stewart will give us the *book, chapter and verse were it says that the thief was NOT baptized!*

Several important facts come to light by a careful analysis of this paragraph.

(1) By comparing Luke's record with that of Matthew and Mark, it is obvious that there was a change in the man's view regarding Jesus. Instead of reviling the Lord, he glorified him and petitioned the Saviour; and Jesus graciously responded to him.

(2) The penitent thief had a good deal of information (not like Mr. Stewart) concerning Christ; exactly when he learned these facts is not specified. But there are two possibilities. Either he learned about Christ, and became convinced of his royalty, during that six-hour episode, or, else he knew about the Saviour from *earlier* circumstances.

It is not impossible that he had been exposed significantly to information about Jesus earlier in his life, had been impressed by it, and, later, had regressed into a life of crime. Note some things about the man's beliefs.

(3) He acknowledged the existence of God. He believed in a standard of right and wrong, he confessed that he and his companion had transgressed divine law, and he conceded they were being punished “justly.”

(4) He asserted the innocence of Christ. The Teacher had done “nothing amiss.” And remember, the Lord was being crucified for his affirmation of being the “Son of the Blessed One” (**Mark 14:61, 62**). The robber’s statement, therefore, is basically an acknowledgement of the truth of Jesus’ claim.

(5) The penitent thief believed that Christ was a “king,” and that this act of murder would not terminate the Saviour’s life; rather, the Lord would “come in [his] kingdom.”

(6) He was confident that Jesus would be able to bless him in that regime. At the very least, these expressions indicate that the thief believed it was possible to have association with the Lord after both of them were dead.

While it is not impossible, it does seem improbable, that this man could have accumulated this much theological information, with such clear implications, and under such excruciating conditions, in such a short period of time. It is entirely feasible, then, that this criminal had absorbed some earlier teaching concerning the Master.

Consider this scenario. Is it not possible that this man could have been a disciple of John the Baptist, or of the Lord himself, or of one of Christ’s disciples as they went forth teaching (**Matthew 10:5ff; Luke 10:1ff**) — during the preceding years? If such were the case, the man might well have been immersed for the forgiveness of his sins on some past occasion (**Mark 1:4; John 4:1-2**).

I am not suggesting that this proposition can be proved; I am simply saying that no one can make the dogmatic statement: “*The thief had never been baptized.*” That is an unknown factor. He might well have been an “erring child of God” at this point.

Mr. Stewart said that “the minister of the church of Christ is trying to say that there are TWO different plans of salvation (one for the OT and one for the NT).”

You see, he is putting words in the minister’s mouth which he did not say. Who is trying to trick his readers, the minister of the church of Christ, or Mr. David J. Stewart? But let me continue about Mr. Stewart’s false allegation about the minister of the church of Christ.

Let us now focus our attention in another direction. The careful Bible student must acknowledge that there are different periods of sacred history, in the course of which, certain religious requirements may vary. *Abraham was never commanded to be baptized or to observe the Lord’s supper.* In today’s era of religious history, we are not obligated to observe the

Passover, or to offer animal sacrifices. God has had different requirements in different periods of history. Honestly I do not think that Mr. Stewart studies the Bible as he ought to.

In view of this principle, consider the following facts.

(1) During his personal ministry, *Jesus possessed the authority to forgive men's sins personally and directly, upon whatever terms he chose*. For example, once while in the city of Capernaum, the Lord encountered a man who was paralyzed. The unfortunate gentleman had been conveyed to where Christ was by four of his friends. When Jesus saw “*their faith*,” he said to the palsied man, “*Son, your sins are forgiven*” (**Mark 2:5**). Then, in order to establish his “*authority*” in the matter of personally forgiving sins “*on earth*” (**2:10**), Christ healed the man of his malady. It is interesting to note that there is no mention made of the fact that the man was required to repent of his sins.

If recorded examples of events occurring during the Lord's personal ministry function as precedent for the Christian age, shall it be concluded that no repentance is obligatory today?

(2) The fact is, while Jesus was on earth he had the authority to dispense blessings *directly* based upon the circumstances at hand. At the time of His death, however, his authority was made resident in his testamentary “*will*” (**Hebrews 9:15-17**). And the terms of that will specify *baptism as a condition of pardon* (**Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21**, etc.).

No one has the legal right to eliminate that condition by appealing to something the Lord did while He was implementing his earthly ministry. The heavenly regime takes precedence over the former.

It becomes very apparent, therefore, that those who appeal to the case of the “*thief on the cross*,” as a specific example for conversion today, are mistaken in several particulars.

(a) They do not comprehend the difference between the Saviour's earthly operations and His current reign from heaven; and,

(b) They have thrust aside the plain demands of the New Covenant economy.

The simple answer is, *God commands water baptism*.

God commands water baptism; and for one who is able to either defy the *command* and refuse, or neglect, or even put off *obedience* to this command until too late, certainly would be an act of *disobedience* which would impose the penalty of sin, and cause loss of salvation.

You need not worry about the thief on the cross—or one utterly unable to be baptized, or one in outer space (see page 38), Mr. Stewart, you need be much concerned, however—you who *are* able—*about obedience to the*

command. It is essential to salvation inasmuch as **God commands it**, and noncompliance is disobedience *which* would mean loss of salvation.

Maybe, some members of denominations who do not believe that baptism is a prerequisite to salvation, will say, yes, I was baptized. But if you were baptized *because* you were saved, that is not a Scriptural baptism and all you have done was you got wet with water.

Mr. Stewart quoted **Acts 10:43** as a proof that the Old Testament people were saved in the same way that we are saved: “*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*” Again, as he has done before, he is quoting that verse *out of its context.*

Peter had declared “*all prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days*” (**Acts 3:24**). The important thing that the prophets bore witness to, and that the apostles were witnesses of, is “*that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins.*” Peter made the claim that the entire Old Testament prophecy bore witness to the universality of the gospel, and that the condition of salvation was through **obedience** to Christ. The remission of sins is through the name of Jesus and belongs to those who believe on Him; Peter had preached before that there is no “*other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved*” (**Acts 4:12**). On the day of Pentecost Peter had told believers, when they asked what to do, that they should “*repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (**Acts 2:38**).

Yes, all are saved by the grace of God, but God wants us to **obey** Him in what He commands. Jesus wants us to *confess Him before men*. In **Matthew 10:32-33** he says, “*Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven.*” If we deny Christ we are going to be lost. We must not be ashamed to confess to other people that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus says in **Mark 8:38**, “*For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*” If He is ashamed of us, that means that we are going to be lost. Mr. Stewart, can you quote, please, the book, chapter and verse in the Old Testament where we find this command? Simple, book, chapter and verse.

Romans 10:9-11: 9 – “*That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* ¹⁰*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

We need to confess to someone else that “*I believe that Jesus is MY Lord and Saviour, and that God raised Him from the dead*” as one of the conditions of our salvation. This will meet the requirements of Scripture. Don’t forget that when Jesus is your Lord, *you do what He tells you to do*. The place to start is to read your Bible **and obey the commands that God gives you there**. And **faith, repentance, confession and baptism in water** are *ALL commands of God!* Disobey ONE of them, and you are lost! It does not matter what George Ebejer or Mr. Stewart say, their opinions are worth nothing, what matters is what our Lord commands (**Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:9**).

Please, Mr. Stewart, can you quote one verse in the Old Testament where it is commanded to the people of that time to *confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead*”?

Now, an example about Noah. How he was Saved?

1 Peter 3:18-22 – “¹⁸*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,* ¹⁹*in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,* ²⁰*because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.* ²¹*Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,* ²²*who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*”

In these verses, Peter draws on the account of Noah’s salvation to illustrate how the Christian is saved. Many people (among them Mr. Stewart) object to the straight forward reading of **1 Peter 3:21** because it stands contrary to what they have accepted. To those people, baptism is simply a ritual without much meaning. Oh, they will agree that it represents something, but that is as far as it goes. It has no meaning to each one of them as individuals. Thus it becomes, in their eyes, an optional act. It has no purpose. It causes no change.

But let’s take the inspired Peter’s comparison and see the parallels between *the saving of Noah and the saving of a Christian*.

What are we being saved from? It seems straight forward. It ought to be obvious, but at the foundation of our controversies, people really don’t understand salvation. Noah’s world was given over entirely to sin (**Genesis 6:4-7**). It wasn’t some sinning or most sinning. The whole world was consumed with it, beyond eight people. While our world has not reached the point of wickedness found in Noah’s day, still the fact remains that sin is widespread (**Romans 3:9-18**). From what do we need rescuing? From sin! How was salvation accomplished?

Noah was saved by grace (**Genesis 6:8**). Mr. Stewart agrees here. Grace means receiving favour or mercy, gaining a gift that was not earned or owed. God could have justly wiped away the entire world, including Noah and his family. But Noah received a gift from God that wasn't earned on Noah's part.

We too are saved by grace (**Ephesians 2:1-7**).

Noah was saved by faith (**Hebrews 11:7**). All agree here. God's gift would have been wasted on Noah, if Noah didn't believe God's warning. God didn't force Noah to be saved. He offered Noah a way to be saved, but that required Noah to believe God. The fact that Noah believed God did not lessen the gift that God offered him. We cannot be saved without belief (**Hebrews 11:6**)

We are saved by grace through the means of faith (**Ephesians 2:8**).

Noah was saved by works (**Hebrews 11:7**). Now here the problem with Mr. Stewart and those who agree with him begins. All the faith in the world would not have saved Noah if his faith did not spur him *to do* as God directed. *The building of the ark led to his salvation*. Noah was *obedient* to God, not partially but *completely* (**Genesis 6:22**).

Our salvation also requires *action* on our part (**Matthew 7:21**). Jesus saves those who **obey** and not those who **believe only** (**Hebrews 5:8-9**). Faith cannot be separated from action (**James 2:14-26**).

Noah was saved by water (**1 Peter 3:20**). At first this seems strange. It was the water that destroyed the world. But if we think in this way, we lost track of the goal. Noah was being saved from a world of sin and the water was the means God used to destroy sin. Peter says *that is the same way we are saved* (**1 Peter 3:21**). Peter makes sure we understand. It is not a physical outward cleansing that brings salvation. It is the **obedient** heart responding to the call of God. No play of words as the "faith only" believers try to do. The water isn't the salvation, *but the means* God used to bring about salvation (**Romans 6:3-7**). Notice that through *baptism* Paul says that sin dies in a man, leaving him a new creature. Is it the water that does it? No, *it is the medium through which God chooses to do His will*. Just as water washed away the evil from the world, leaving a new world for Noah and his family, *baptism* washes away our sins (**Acts 22:16**).

It is the putting off of sin done by God through our faith in the *working of God* when we **obey** God (**Colossians 2:11-13**). Baptism is *the working of God* and not our work.

How are we saved? In much the same way Noah was saved. Noah wasn't warned of the impending doom and then created his own method to save his family. He was given the method by God. He responded in faith doing as God directed. And as a consequence, he and his family were saved.

We are warned of impending doom as well. (**2 Peter 3:9-14**). We were given by God – not man – *the means by which we can be saved*. Our only choice, if we want to be saved, is *to do* as God directed completely. ***Only in complete obedience to God can we be saved.*** (**Ephesians 2:10**).

Read **Hebrews 11** and see how all those great characters of the Old Testament were saved, by faith in God and by **OBEDIENCE TO ALL HIS COMMANDS**.

How will you be saved? Listening to men who claim *partial obedience* is good enough? Or by ***doing all that God commanded as Noah did?***

Forget about what George Ebejer says. Forget about what Mr. Stewart says. **DO EXACTLY WHAT THE LORD COMMANDS!** Are you ready to “*obey God rather than men*”? (**Acts. 5:29**).

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

I asked the minister what would happen if an astronaut placed his faith in Christ while in outer space? Obviously he couldn't get water baptized in space! His answer was another mere, “I don't know.” How pathetic!!! How can a man go to a supposed Bible college for four years and earn a degree in theology, just to tell me that he doesn't know how a person in outer space could be saved! I'll tell you why! Because the whole doctrine of baptismal regeneration is flawed and makes no Biblical sense. He might as well become a Lutheran or a Catholic to believe that garbage.

Baptismal regeneration is of the Devil. Jesus didn't baptize (John 4:2). In the book of Romans, water baptism is only mentioned briefly in chapter six. Paul NEVER makes any direct command to be baptized! Yet, Paul expresses in Romans 10:1 that it is his "HEARTS DESIRE" for the people to be saved. Paul wanted people to be saved, that is why he went publicly from house-to-house in Acts 20:20 to witness to people. We soul-winners call this the "Acts 20/20 vision." In other words, if your consumed about winning souls to Christ, then your seeing 20/20 as a Christian. Most believers are wearing blinders.

MY ANSWER:

Now Mr. Stewart went to outer space, too. He said: “how can a man go to a supposed Bible college for four years and earn a degree in theology...” I assure Mr. Stewart that I have ***never*** gone to a Bible college, I have no degrees in theology. I study my Bible daily at home and I have been studying my Bible for many years. So you cannot use your insulting words against me.

Mr. Stewart, the “God-would-not-do-that” argument that you are using to deceive your readers can be used against almost any commandment in the Bible. But this kind of argument is not used by honest and sincere people who really want to please the Lord.

Now let us see *how honest you are*, Mr. Stewart. You said that the minister of the church of Christ was perplexed when you told him that a Christian could commit murder and still be saved (see p. 66). I believe that *but only if he repents*. But now, to your astronaut mistaken argument. I hope that you will not be perplexed, too, Mr. Stewart, to give me an answer!

If a Christian commits murder and at the time he is trying to get away from the crime spot a plane crashes on the house and he is killed instantly, without having the chance to repent, will he still be saved? I hope that you will not continue to make more mistakes and use the *loophole* which is common to you and say that he was never saved, now! The saying says, *honesty is the best policy*, Mr. Stewart! Don't try to deceive your readers by such arguments. Why you are not ready to put aside all the false teaching and accept only what the Bible really says?

Again, for instance, the Bible repeatedly says that a person must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (**Romans 10:11**; **John 8:24**; et al.). Suppose, then, Mr. Stewart, that a Christian had just begun to tell the story of Jesus to an older gentleman, when suddenly that gentleman has a massive heart attack and dies without getting to hear the rest of the story, and thus did not have the opportunity *to believe*. *Should we, therefore, do away with the biblical command to believe in Jesus Christ*, simply because a theoretical scenario can be concocted in which a potential convert dies moments before his compliance? To ask is to answer. *Nor, with a wave of the hand, can we do away with the biblical command to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)*. What is your answer, Mr. Stewart, is it another mere, "I don't know." After you give me the answer, maybe I will say, How pathetic!!! Show us your honesty and sincerity, Mr. Stewart! It takes courage to be honest!

This false argument of yours can be also applied to "repentance." Can a person who has not yet been converted to Christ be saved without repentance? Give us your honest answer, Mr. Stewart. My answer is NO, he cannot. (**Luke 13:3**). Now, Mr. Stewart, what would happen if an *astronaut* continues his studies of the plan of salvation while in outer space and the rocket or shuttle explodes **before** he had the chance to repent, or even to confess Christ as his Lord? I do not believe that one needs to go to a Bible college or earn a degree in theology to give an honest answer to these questions, Mr. Stewart! Would your answer now be another mere, "I don't know." How pathetic!!!

Satan has been around for a long time, he knows our weakness, he has many tactics, Satan uses people. I marvel how many sincere people are caught in that false teaching without even realizing that they are being deceived! But they have no excuse. They ought to read **Ephesians 5:6**.

Consider also the fact that the Bible plainly states that God wants all people to be saved. In **2 Peter 3:9**, the inspired apostle wrote: "*The Lord is*

*not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that **all should come to repentance.***” The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel was instructed by God to convey this message to the Israelites on God’s behalf: “‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked **turn from his way and live**’” (**Ezekiel 33:11**). The apostle Paul told the young preacher Timothy that God “*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (**1 Timothy 2:3-4**). Therefore, if a person truly and honestly wants to become a Christian by being baptized for the forgiveness of his sins *as God commanded*, then God (who wants all to be saved and is watchful of each individual human) certainly would provide an opportunity for that person to obey His commandment *to be baptized*. If no sparrow falls to the ground apart from God’s knowledge (**Matthew 10:29**), and God is no respecter of persons (**Acts 10:34**), then we can be sure that His providential care will ensure that each person is given a fair opportunity to respond to His commands. I believe that you, Mr. Stewart, do not have complete trust in God. You doubt Him.

Mr. Stewart said that “Jesus didn’t baptize (**John 4:2**).” But was He baptized, Mr. Stewart? (**Matthew 3:13-17**). Why was He baptized?

One thing is certain. Jesus was not baptized by John in the vein of the prophet’s ordinary sphere of operation. John immersed people who penitently confessed their sins (**Mt. 3:6,8**), and the purpose of his baptism was “*for the remission of sins*” (**Mk. 1:4**).

The preposition “for” (Greek, *eis*) means “to obtain” (Thayer, 94). The phrase may be rendered: “so that sins might be forgiven” (Arndt, 228). Since Jesus had no sin (**Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22**), it is obvious that His immersion by John was of a unique sort. He did not approach John seeking pardon.

Now, one has to be extra careful about false teachers because such false teachers give this interpretation about Jesus’ baptism and our baptism. Some say, “We are immersed for the same reason Jesus was. He was not baptized ‘in order to become’ a son of God, but rather, ‘because of’ being a son already. Hence, we are not immersed to become children of God, but because we are such already.” You see, Satan is very very cunning. But their argument is invalid for several reasons.

First, it contradicts the plain testimony of the apostle John and Paul. John writes, “¹²*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave **the right to become children of God***” (**John 1:12**). Notice, the *believer* has the right *to become* a child of God. Not that he is already a child of God, but he has the *right to become* a member of God’s family. There are examples of believers who *did* become children of God (**Acts**

2:36-47; 8:26-39; etc.), as well as those examples of believers *who did not* become God's children (**John 8:31-44; 12:42-43; Acts 26:19-29; etc.**). But how one become a child of God? Paul, tells us how: "²⁶*for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.* ²⁷*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (**Gal. 3:26-27**). Paul declared that we become children of God *at the point of our baptism into Christ* because it is *at the point of baptism the one put on Christ* and not before!

Second, the argument is inconsistent with their own doctrinal position. Think about this. If it is the case that we are baptized for precisely the same reason Christ was, then it also follows that Jesus was immersed for the same reason that we are. Things equal to each other are equal to the same thing.

Since they claim that they had been baptized "on account of the forgiveness of his sins," that would logically imply that Jesus was immersed "on account of the forgiveness of his sins." This, of course, was a conclusion which they would not accept; it is, however, the logical result of their argument.

Thus, except for the fact that Jesus' baptism reflected a willingness to **obey** the Father, as does ours, there is little relationship between the Lord's immersion and that required of all accountable people today (**Mk. 16:16**).

We may not understand all the reasons why Christ submitted to baptism. We have a limited view of that wonderful event. We should, however, note this: If the sinless Son of God did not refuse this divine ordinance, how much less should men today *neglect the command, which is declared to be "for the remission of sins"* (**Acts 2:38**). Do you prefer to obey men, Mr. Stewart and not *obey a command given by our Lord*?

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

Paul NEVER makes any direct command to be baptized! Yet, Paul expresses in Romans 10:1 that it is his "HEARTS DESIRE" for the people to be saved. Paul wanted people to be saved, that is why he went publicly from house-to-house in Acts 20:20 to witness to people. We soul-winners call this the "Acts 20/20 vision." In other words, if your consumed about winning souls to Christ, then your seeing 20/20 as a Christian. Most believers are wearing blinders.

MY ANSWER:

Why Mr. Stewart said that Paul NEVER makes any direct command to be baptized? As I have said before, either Mr. Stewart does not read his Bible or he wants to deceive his readers. Listen to what Paul says about what he teaches:

Paul wrote that God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Similarly, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). Then Paul wrote: “¹¹For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man’s gospel. ¹²For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12). Yes, I agree that Paul NEVER makes any direct command of his, but Jesus makes a direct command to be baptized (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). You see what happens when someone tries to deceive his readers by taking a verse or even a whole chapter out of its context? *Jesus gave the command* and in the writings of Paul, JESUS REVEALED TO PAUL TO WRITE DOWN WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO OBEY HIS COMMAND: “³Do you not know that *all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴We were buried therefore with him *by baptism* into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly *be united with him in a resurrection like his*” (Rom. 6:3-5). “¹²having been buried with him *in baptism*, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.” “²⁷For as many of you as were *baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Gal. 3:27). All this, and other passages, was said by Paul, but it was revealed to him by Jesus Christ, Mr. Stewart!

The truth is something that is critical with regards to our salvation — as these passages indicate. The inspired Paul warns us against people who use the Word of God to deceive others by saying: “⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, *for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:6). If we let someone to deceive us and accept his false teaching, then we are being disobedient to God’s warning and because of that we will have the wrath of God upon us. Think about that. Do you want to have the wrath of God upon you because you are letting someone to deceive you?

It is good to read **James 3:1**, Mr. Stewart (I read it often so that I am on the alert all the time about what I teach from God’s Word).

James 3:1 – “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that *we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.*”

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

No Rapture or Millennium?

The Church of Christ minister also said he DIDN'T believe in any type of rapture, but that the Lord would simply return and part the righteous from the wicked. We are clearly taught in God's Word that there will be a "departure" of the saints from this world; hence, the word rapture (which is not itself found in the Bible). The words of the Apostle Paul in 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 are as clear as can be. In the twinkling of an eye, the Lord WILL return.

Read it for yourself. Why can't people just take the Bible at face value? Why do they persist to read in-between the lines? Why do they seek for things that God has NOT placed in the Bible? Luke 17:36 is still in the King James Bible folks! Matthew 24:41 is still in the Bible! Two shall be, and one shall remain

MY ANSWER:

What about the so called "rapture"? Again, one cannot take a verse (out of its context, which is something that Mr. Stewart does often) and apply it to a false teaching which is not Scriptural. This is what Mr. Stewart is doing. He tells us to "Read it for yourself. Why can't people just take the Bible at face value? Why do they persist to read in-between the lines? Why do they seek for things that God has NOT placed in the Bible? Luke 17:36 is still in the King James Bible folks! Matthew 24:41 is still in the Bible! Two shall be, and one shall remain."

Yes, it is still in the Bible, but who is reading between the lines? Neither in Matthew nor in Luke are we told that this "taking" is the Rapture. It is you, Mr. Stewart that is reading between the lines and putting it in the Bible.

Matthew 24:39-41 (Luke 17:26-35 parallel passage) is actually *not talking about a rapture of Christians*. When you read *the context*, you actually realize that it is *the bad people who are raptured* away to be judged *and the good Christians are left behind* which is *contrary* to what Mr. Stewart believe and is teaching! Remember, Jesus was making a parallel analogy with the flood of Noah's day. As it was in the days before the flood, people were doing their regular things and they knew nothing until (**verse 39**) the flood came and took them all away. In the flood, *who was left behind?* Noah and his family, and those in the ark – **the good people, right?** And "*that is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*" Two men will be in the field; one will be taken – away into judgement – and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken – away into judgement – and the other left behind. Those left behind are not the bad people but the good people, just like Noah and his family. Left behind on earth. So, far from supporting a rapture theory, this goes *against* the rapture theory! Jesus' main point here is that people will be surprised at his Second coming. Just as they were not ready for it when the flood came, so it will be at Christ's return. Everyone will be going about their normal business and then, judgement will come.

THE RAPTURE AND TRIBULATION

Let us see these doctrines of premillennialism which are contrary to what the Bible teaches.

Matt. 24:36 – “*But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*”

Men have made predictions about the second coming of Christ since the early years – over 220 predictions have been made about the time of His second coming. [See Library of Date Setters of the End of the World]. Today men are teaching the doctrine of premillennialism which has a false view about the coming of Christ. It involves these terms called the “Rapture” and “Tribulation”.

While many people, as did Mr. Stewart, use **Matthew 24:41** and **Luke 17:36** to explain the rapture, it is saying something totally opposite. “*As in the days of Noah...when the flood came*” (vv 37-39), those who were “taken” from the earth were the evil, unbelieving people. Those who were “left” were the righteous believers that heeded God’s warning through Noah, i.e. Noah and his family who were left on earth to “begin again” after a cleansing judgment by God. Of the “two” in the field and at the mill in the above verses, the righteous of the two would flee at that time of the signs, “not turning back to get his coat” or go back into his house “to get the things out that are in his house” (vv17-20). Having fled the city, the righteous were saved *from destruction* and left on earth to begin again as “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17) after a cleansing judgment by God. The unrighteous, unbelieving stayed and were “taken” in the sacking of Jerusalem by the Roman army. Read verses 37-41 in their context.

Those who “did not understand” were the wicked. So also in 70 AD at the destruction of Jerusalem, the righteous understood, heeded the warning of Jesus to flee the city when the signs came (vv 5-21) and were saved, thereby “left” on the earth to “begin again.” The unrighteous, unbelieving ignored Jesus warning and stayed in the city. These were “taken” in death *like* the unrighteous of Noah’s day.

The Rapture is a mass migration of living and dead, born-again Christians. Some believe that they will ascend through the air and meet Jesus Christ in the sky. The word comes from the Latin word “*Rapare*” which means to take away or to snatch out.

Origin of this doctrine Can be traced back to a Pentecostal movement in the early 1800's – A man by the name of Edward Irving – lived from 1792-1834. A young woman named Margaret McDonald of Glasgow Scotland first came up with the idea of a two state coming of Christ – Then others began to teach the same things. It developed into these doctrines of pre-millennialism. Many religious people believe that The Rapture will occur at the time that Christ first returns towards earth. Most believe that Christ

will not actually land or stay on earth at this time; the “real” second coming will occur later, when he returns with an army. Then he will come to reign for 1000 years on this earth with Jerusalem as his headquarters.

Summary – Rapture – Jesus will come and take the righteous, both living and the dead and they will be with Jesus in the air for 7 ½ years. There will be Tribulation on the earth for this 7 ½ years. At the end of this time Jesus will return to the earth. The battle of Armageddon will occur and the 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth will begin with headquarters in Jerusalem.

All False. Not in the Bible.

Recent developments. Hal Lindsey’s book “The Late Great Planet Earth.” The “Left Behind” series of books by Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye.

Let us notice the truth of the Bible about these matters....

THE RAPTURE – The word rapture is not even in the Scriptures and the doctrine with that name is unscriptural also. Mr. Stewart accept this that it is not in the Scriptures.

The books of **1 and 2 Thessalonians**, read **honestly in context**, (as usual, Stewart takes a verse *out of its context*) forever disprove such a notion. Both epistles were written to the same people and discuss one major point:

The Coming of the Lord – Not one single time in the 8 chapters of the two books do we see any indication of more than **one coming** of the Saviour. Doctrine of men not of God. We follow the Lord and not people like Edward Irving, Hal Lindsey or Margaret McDonald, Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye!

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 – This passage contains the main description that men use for the rapture. This passage was written by Paul about 51 AD, when he was living in Corinth. It was addressed to the Christians at Thessalonica, capital of Macedonia. This was an early writing by Paul. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul apparently is correcting a misunderstanding about the return of Christ. It would seem that the Thessalonians were concerned that only those Christians who were alive at the second coming might share in the Kingdom of God at Christ’s return. They held beliefs that Paul wanted to correct: Some felt that their Christian friends and relatives who had died since Jesus’ execution might not take part in the resurrection. Some felt that those who had recently died may have forfeited their salvation by the act of dying. Some may have believed that through their baptism, that their fellow Christians should have become immune to death. They would have been concerned that their friends' and relatives' deaths might indicate that they had not been saved.

Paul refers to the dead euphemistically as “those who fall asleep.” He tied their hope for salvation and a future life in heaven to their belief in the resurrection of Christ. Paul was anxious to assure the Thessalonians that

their beliefs were mistaken, In **1 Thessalonians 4:15**, Paul refers to “the Lord’s own word” as the source of his teaching. He comforts his readers by assuring them that the Christians who are still alive will “certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.” (**1Thes. 4:15**).

Summing up the Thessalonians letters on the Lord’s coming, Paul taught them 6 major points: **1.** Patiently wait for His coming. Many of them thought it would be immediate. **2.** He will come as a thief in the night. No-one knows the time. Christians should be comforted by the Lord's return. It will be a day of rejoicing. **3.** When He does come, both the ungodly and the righteous will be dealt with. *No separated period.* **4.** Those who have died in the Lord will be joined with the Christians still alive to meet the Lord in the air. **5.** But, at the same time (**Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; 2 Thess. 1:4-10**) the disobedient will be separated from the “*presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.*”

Acts 24:15 – “*And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*”

John 5:28-29 – “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ²⁹And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*”

Not one word is mentioned about 7 years of rapture for the saints and great tribulation for those remaining on the earth.

The dispensational premillennialist tries *desperately* to create a distinction between Christ’s coming “for” the saints and His coming “with” the saints. One can see how far they go to teach their false teachings. Their favourite verse for this is **1 Thessalonians 3:13**, but it just does not teach this. “*To the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*” In **Ecclesiastes 12:7** we learn that when we die our spirit goes to the Hadean realm, and our body returns to the dust. “*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*” (**Ecc. 12:7**). It is significant that both **Daniel 12:2** and **Matthew 27:52** inform us that the body sleeps in the grave – not the spirit.

(1) **Daniel 12:2** – “*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*”

(2) **Matthew 27:52** – “*And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,*”

Evidently, then, when we are raised (**John 5:28-29**) in the last day (**John 12:48**) our bodies will come forth from the grave and as we rise to meet the

Lord in the air (**1 Thess. 4:17**) He shall meet us and our spirit will be joined with our body.

a. **1 Thessalonians 4:17** – *“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

b. **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** – *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”*

The doctrine of the Rapture and Tribulation is a part of the Millennial doctrine...

1. RAPTURE – Dead Christians raised and living Christians transformed.
2. SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION–Calamities befall those left behind.
3. CHRIST’S RETURN – Earthly kingdom established.
4. THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN – Christ rules earthly kingdom from Jerusalem.
5. END – World ends; remaining dead raised, judged, and rewarded/punished.

According to this millennial *theory* the saints will be at peace while sinners are in great tribulation on earth.

We should carefully read the exciting lessons contained in the parables of the tares and the fishnet. **Matthew 13:24-30** – **Matthew 13:36-43**. Our Saviour clearly stated the *righteous and the ungodly* would dwell side by side until separated for all eternity into either heaven or hell. But people like Mr. Stewart prefer to accept the false teaching of men than the teaching of Christ.

Matthew 13:47-50 parable of fish net – angels shall sever the wicked from among the just. There will be only *ONE* resurrection composed of *both* the good and the evil (**Acts 24:15**). *“...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”* Are we reading between the line, Mr. Stewart? Or are we seeking for things that God has NOT placed in the Bible? The Bible clearly says that, *both of the just and unjust will be resurrected at the same time*. But when someone tries to read between the lines, then false teaching will be created, as in the case of the “rapture.” Mr. Stewart, does the Bible says that that *“there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”* (**Acts 24:15**).

John 5:28-29 – *“²⁸Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”*

Dr. Robert Strong gave this definition of the rapture: “By the rapture is meant the sudden and possible secret coming of Christ in the air to catch away from the earth the resurrected bodies of those who have died in the faith and with them the living saints.”

At least two things wrong with the Rapture Doctrine.

1. It will not be secret. How-ever, according to **Revelation 1:7** we learn that **EVERY EYE** will see the Lord when He comes. “*Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*”

Titus 2:13 – “*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*” There will be nothing secret about the matter.

2. It will not be silent. It will not be quiet either. In **2 Peter 3:10** and **1 Thessalonians 4** and **2 Thessalonians 1:4-10** we read of great noise, flaming fire and sound like a trumpet to accompany the Lord’s coming. (1) **2 Peter 3:10** – “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*”

(2) Great Noise – not quietly and in secret. Dr. DeHaan of Michigan once wrote a dramatic account of what he expected to happen at the rapture. He said that one morning men would awaken to find wives and children missing and highways would be filled with massive car wrecks because some parents, offspring and drivers would be suddenly caught up in the clouds while their sinful mates and co-workers would be left in great tribulation on the earth. This is where the bumper sticker “**In case of rapture this car will no longer have a driver**” came from. Another one reads: “**The rapture; the only way to fly.**” The put God’s Word to ridicule. The rapture is called by men “The great Snatch” or “The Great Escape.” The graphic wording and descriptive analysis of the Thessalonians epistle clearly show that the righteous are not taken away before the Judgment day but they are present with the wicked until the time the ungodly receive punishment at which time the righteous receive their reward (**Rev 20:11-15**).

These doctrines are not found in the Bible, only in the imaginations of men.

THE TRIBULATION

Now, let us turn our attention to the great tribulation. John Darby, the father of dispensational teaching, cited four passages that he claimed had “unequalled tribulation,” through which he said evil men will pass but from which the true church would be exempt.

The verses Darby used were **Jeremiah 30:7**; **Matthew 24:21**; **Daniel 12:1**; and **Mark 13:19**. A careful study of these passages, however, ruins Darby's philosophy.

1. **Jeremiah 30:7** – *“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the **time of Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be saved out of it.”*

The verse in Jeremiah definitely identifies “the time of Jacob's trouble” as Babylonian captivity. This *is not* referring to the end of time.

2. **Daniel 12:1** – *“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a **time of trouble**, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”*

Daniel's reference to “a time of trouble” had to do with the evil Seleucidan domination 175 years before Christ when Antiochus defiled the temple in Jerusalem.

That's what the “abomination of desolation” means. Defiling the Holy Place. Not a reference to the end of time.

3. **Matthew 24:21** – *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”*

a. The passage concerning “great tribulation” was fulfilled in “that generation” (**Matt. 24:35**) at the destruction of Jerusalem. The reference to **Mark 13:19** is a parallel verse to **Matthew 24:21**!

29 times in the New Testament Christ and the apostles use the word tribulation and refer it to the suffering, trials and persecutions *in this life* that will befall the faithful Christian.

1. In the familiar parable of the sower in **Matthew 13:21** our Lord taught that some would “fall away” because of persecution and tribulation.

2. In **Acts 14:22**, after being stoned at Lystra, Paul mentioned that entering the kingdom of the Master and “much tribulation” went together.

3. In **John 16:33** our Redeemer made it crystal clear that those disciples of His – in the first century – would have tribulation in the world of that day! *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

4. In the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt 5:10-12**) and in **John 16** our Saviour tied persecution and following Him inseparably together.

This is the great tribulation the saints John viewed, according to **Revelation 7:14** had come out of!

This is the way the Bible speaks of tribulation. Nowhere in the Bible is the word “tribulation” used in connection with a seven year period at the end

of the age, either while the church is still on the earth or after the church has been removed from the earth. Instead, it is used to describe the sufferings of Christians, the sufferings inflicted upon worldly rejecters of Christ, and the sufferings especially prophesied for the Jewish nation at various times in its past history.

CONCLUSION

These two ideas of the Rapture and the Tribulation are part of a false system that is not taught in the Bible.

2. **1 Thessalonians 4** does not say that the saints shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and “there shall we be for seven years.” The Bible teaches in **1 Thessalonians 4:17**: “So shall we ever be with the Lord.”

3. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins we are taught in a most interesting way that when the Bridegroom comes the door is shut to the unprepared while the righteous are enjoying the marriage supper. That is exactly the lesson in **John 5:28-29**. Yes, when Jesus comes again ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVE shall come forth at that time. It will be a moment of reward for the righteous and remorse for the wicked. *No seven year period will separate the judgment and certainly not a 1,000 year period.* Premillennialism, with all of its errors, the rapture and the tribulation, is not true. They have too many resurrections and comings of the Lord! There will be only one.

Christ’s Kingdom is not future

It has been in existence for nearly 2000 years. **John 18:36** Jesus said: “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” **Matthew 16:18-19** Jesus promised Peter that he could open the doors of the kingdom and he did this on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in **Acts 2**. John, the apostle, stated in **Revelation 1:9** that he was “*in the Kingdom.*” **Mark 9:1** says: “*And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.*” **2 Thessalonians 1** boldly ruins the concept that when the Lord returns He will give sinners another chance to obey. The idea of the tribulation is that people during these 7 years will have a second chance to obey the Gospel. Contrariwise, **verses 7-9** inform us that the ungodly will then be punished!

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 – “*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*”

Would you fall into that category now? It is a shame that so many honest and sincere folks have swallowed the Rapture, Tribulation doctrine associated with premillennialism. Let us do all we can to help our friends and neighbours learn the truth about these matters. Ask yourselves, all of you who are being taught to believe that false doctrine, are you accepting and believing what your religious leaders are telling you by quoting to you, out of their context, certain verses from the Bible, or are you obeying God? I have been present in a study presented by a teacher who believe this false doctrine and I have noticed that the majority of those present did not even knew what was being said. How many of them did what the Bible tells us to do after they heard what was being said: “¹¹*Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*” (Acts 17:11). After you have read what I have written here, it is your responsibility to open your Bible as search in it to see what I have said if it is from God or from me. Be very careful, when you read your Bible, and you find yourself in some difficulty, and you go to your preacher so that he will explain to you your difficulty, you have to be careful that you will not accept his interpretation instead of what the Bible is really saying. Mostly this is what happens with some people.

Bibliography

1. Much of this material was gathered from the “Search” TV program, and was written by Mac Lyon.
2. Files on Premillennialism
3. The Left Behind Series - by Wayne Jackson – Christian Courier Sept. 25, 2000

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

This foolish minister also said he didn't believe there would be a Millennial reign of Christ. Revelation 20:1-6 speaks of the 1,000 year millennium. The purpose of this article is NOT to get into depth of these individual Bible doctrines, but rather to expose the heretical teachings of the Church of Christ. A study of Biblical prophecy is beyond the scope of this article. The Bible is very clear concerning the departure of the saints from this world (the rapture) and of the Millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem over the earth. Satan will be bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:3).

MY ANSWER:

Again, Mr. Stewart shows to us how he obeys Jesus' words to love your neighbour as yourself. Now, Stewart addresses this “sincere misguided minister” (as he called him, see page 8) “This *foolish* minister”. Yes, Mr. Stewart is perfect, he is authoritative, and he has the authority to use such language against others!! But I cannot comprehend how the Holy Spirit

can abide in such a person who uses that foul language against a “sincere” minister who does not agree with him in what he believes. But our Lord tells us about what will happen to those who use such careless words:

“³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:36-37).

Some words that this perfect man (Mr. Stewart) used against this sincere minister (my brother in Christ) of the church of Christ are: wolves in sheep clothing, idiot, wayward, foolish, liar.

I am sure that Satan is very happy with the way Mr. Stewart is addressing and offending the sentiments of other human beings who are trying to do their best to please God. It will be good for Mr. Stewart to read **Matthew 7:1-5**.

But the greatest and horrible accusation that Mr. Stewart makes and that Satan is at the peak of his false glory is against a **command** given by our beloved Lord Jesus Christ when he calls baptism “**uh oh! This is damnable heresy!**” If these words are not “careless” words then I do not know what they are!

Yes, Mr. Stewart, we are “foolish” because we preach the “*foolishness of the message*” and not the “wisdom of the world, like you are doing. You know everything, (you think), in your eyes we are *wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, wayward, foolish, liars*. Thank you for your compliments, Mr. Stewart, and for your example of how to treat others with whom you do not agree, thank you.

“²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

Now, what about the false teaching that **Revelation 20:1-6** speaks of the 1,000 year millennium? About the Millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem over the earth. That Satan will be bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (**Revelation 20:3**).

Again, here Mr. Stewart shows his authority to take any verse from the Bible, (in this case from Revelation 20, and take it at face value, [that is, “to accept someone or something just as it appears; to believe that the way things appear is the way they really are.”]) He says: “Why can't people just take the Bible at face value?”

I ask Mr. Stewart, does he take all the symbols in the Book of Revelation *at face value*, literally? (see from p. 42.) We will see.

First let me give a brief account of what the position that Mr. Stewart is regarding the 1,000 years: After a seven year Tribulation period, Christ returns to earth to establish His Kingdom. All enemies of Christ who

remain alive at His coming will be rounded up and executed as war criminals. Only the faithful will remain alive to repopulate the earth during the Millennium. The faithful dead from past ages join the living faithful. The coming back to life of the faithful dead is identified as “the first resurrection.” The faithful are identified as “princes” of Christ and are awarded “thrones” upon which they sit and judge for 1,000 years. The Christ, once rejected by the Jews, will be crowned “King of the Jews” and will assume His rightful reign as the Son of David. During the 1,000 years all is peaceful on earth as harmony reigns (**Isaiah 11:6-9**). The converted Jews constitute the ruling authority over all the world. Temple sacrifices will resume and there will be no death, except for those executed as rebels to God. After the 1,000 years Satan will try to lead a rebellion only to be destroyed by fire from heaven.

For any interpretation of a symbolic passage to be acceptable it must demonstrate harmony with other biblical texts that are not couched in symbolism. It is this point that devastates the Dispensational doctrines built upon the 1,000 years in **Revelation 20**. Although there are many points that illustrate the contraction of the Dispensational position, the ones listed below are among the most prominent.

First, the doctrine states that Christ is to reign upon the earth. However the Scriptures clearly teach that at the Lord’s Second Coming *there will be no earth existing* (**2 Peter 3:10**). The Dispensational defender tries to evade this contradiction by stating that this present earth will be “renewed” and thus the Lord will reign upon “the NEW earth” and in “the NEW Jerusalem.” Although such appears to resolve the contradiction it only amplifies it! Peter is very clear in telling us that this present earth will be “renewed,” it will be “dissolved”!

Second, their doctrine states that Christ’s reign is to begin when He comes. However the Scriptures state that when Christ comes again the saints will receive their resurrected bodies and “*then cometh the end when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God*” (**1 Corinthians 15:24**). Thus, the Bible says the Kingdom *will end, not begin*, when the Lord returns!

Third, their doctrine says the Christian’s “hope” is realized when the Kingdom is established in earthly Jerusalem. However the Bible states the Christian’s “hope” is not connected to an earthly city or Kingdom — it is “*reserved in heaven*” (**1 Peter 1:4**).

Fourth, Their doctrine contends that the Kingdom IS NOT yet established, but it will be established upon Christ’s return. However the Bible states that the *Colossians had been translated into the Kingdom* (**Colossians 1:13**), the Hebrews were “*receiving it*” (**Hebrews 12:29**), and that John was “*in it*” (**Revelation 1:9**). If their doctrine of the 1,000 years is correct

then John, the Colossians, and the Hebrews were all deceived! Who should we believe — the Bible or Stewart’s doctrine?

Fifth, Their doctrine contends that Christ is not yet seated upon the “throne of David” as spoken by the Scriptures. It is contended that since Christ is not seated upon David’s Throne, the Kingdom has not been established. The Premillennial advocate makes a great distinction between “God’s Throne” (upon which they say Christ is now seated) and upon “David’s Throne” (upon which Christ is to sit during His Kingdom). If it can be demonstrated that Christ is upon “David’s Throne” now, it will be shown that He is upon the “throne” of His Millennial Kingdom. Such is a simple chore to do. David said that Solomon would sit upon “*my throne*,” and Solomon did (cf. **1 Kings 1:37, 47**). It is important for our discussion to observe that “*David’s Throne*” was also called “*God’s Throne*” (**1 Chronicles 29:23**)! Hence the throne of David is the throne of God. The two do not represent two different things but the same! If Christ is seated upon God’s throne, He is also seated upon David’s throne because they are the same! Numerous texts verify that Christ ascended and sat upon “God’s Throne,” hence He ascended and sat upon “David’s Throne” (**Acts 1:11; 2:29-35; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 2:12; 8:1; 10:12**; etc.). Peter’s sermon verified this conclusion — Christ ascended in confirmation of God’s promise to David and in heaven Christ reigns upon David’s Throne (**Acts 2:29-35**). However their doctrine of the 1,000 years says the “throne of God” is in heaven and the “throne of David” is on earth. Where can their doctrine find consistent Scriptural support? They denies that Christ is NOW on David’s Throne — it actually dethrones our Lord!

Sixth, Their doctrine says Jesus must serve as BOTH High Priest and King while He is reigning on earth. However the Holy Scriptures say that Christ **CANNOT** be a High Priest while on earth because He is not from Levi’s tribe (**Hebrews 7:14**). Also, the Scriptures say Christ **CANNOT** be a King because He is a descendant of Jehoiachin (or Coniah) and God forbade any of this man’s descendants from reigning on earth (**Jeremiah 22:30; Matthew 1:12**). To state that Christ must reign on earth for 1,000 years is *to compel Him to disobey God*.

Seventh, their doctrine says Christ must reign on earth because the 1,000 years are literal. If the 1,000 years are literal, ALL other symbols must be literal. If this is the case then those who will reign with Christ are restricted by a literal rendering of the terms in **Revelation 20:4**. Their doctrine will not admit this and so it “spiritualizes” some of the symbols and interprets others in a literal manner, and not at face value. However the choice of what is literal and what is symbolic is determined by the doctrine and not with reasoning from other texts. Such a method of interpretation is “*wresting the Scriptures*” to suit one’s preconceived doctrinal bias.

Eighth, their doctrine “*reads into*” **Revelation 20** these details that are *not found* in the text but are critical to the doctrine: *the reign takes place on earth; the reign takes place in Jerusalem; the reign requires a physical resurrection of dead saints; the reign requires a full restoration of the Temple worship; and, the reign requires a restoration of fleshly Israel.* As a careful reading is made it will soon be discovered that *there is no hint of the reign taking place on earth, in Jerusalem, no physical resurrection, no Temple restoration, and no restoration of fleshly Israel.* And note: **Revelation 20:1-6 does not even mention the Second Coming of Christ!** This text does not even refer to the Lord’s return, yet an entire doctrinal system about the Second Coming has been founded upon it!

Ninth, **Revelation 20:6** says, “*6Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*”

Notice, “*but they will be priests....they will reign with him for a thousand years.*”

Is Christ reigning today? Yes. (**2 Timothy 6:15**). Are Christians, **today**, **priests**, reigning with Christ? Yes!

1 Peter 2:5, 9 – “*You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a **holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ....⁹But you are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*”

Revelation 1:6 – “*6And **made us a kingdom, priests** to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*”

“*And made us*”, what did He made us? **kingdom, priests** to his God and Father. “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*”

At the present time, we are **IN** the kingdom and not waiting for the kingdom to be established in the future! That is what God’s Word says, but certain false teachers are teaching contrary to what God say.

Then the “*thousand years*” refers to the whole present Christian Age because we are “*a **royal priesthood***” which means, that we are ***reigning with Christ as King in His kingdom.***

The obvious contradictions of their doctrine of the 1,000 years are too many to list. Enough has been listed to reveal the total error of such a doctrine. ***All sincere students of God’s Holy Word need to beware of this deadly doctrine lest they are deceived by it (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11).***

So, the context (not someone who thinks that he knows all) must determine the meaning and the use of the word. Let us, then, let the *context* determine the meaning of the phrase “*one thousand years.*”

Note some examples of symbols in Revelation, especially in chapters 19 to 20:

1. **The Great Prostitute (19:2)**
2. **Marriage of the Lamb (19:9)**
3. **White Horse (19:11)**
4. **Armies – Horses – Battle (19:11,14)**
5. **The Lamb (19:9)**
6. **Eyes Like a Flame of Fire (19:12)**
7. **Iron Rod (19:15)**
8. **Tread the Wine Press of the Fury of the Wrath of God (19:15)**
9. **Sword Coming out of the Mouth (19:15)**
10. **Robe and Name on His Thigh (19:16)**
11. **All the Birds Eat all Kinds of Flesh (19:17-18)**
12. **Birds Gather for the Great Supper of God (19:17)**
13. **Beast – Mark – Image (19:20)**
14. **Angle coming down from heaven (20:1)**
15. **Key of the Bottomless Pit (20:1)**
16. **Bottomless pit (20:1)**
17. **Great Chain (20:1)**
18. **Dragon with Seven heads – Tail – Stars (12:4)**
19. **Frogs (16:13)**
20. **Thousand Years (20:2-6)**
21. **Shut and Sealed (20:3)**
22. **Thrones (20:4)**
23. **Beheaded (20:4)**
24. **Prison – Loosed – War (20:7)**
25. **Etc.**

If these are not literal but symbolic, then why take the *thousand year*, the first resurrection, or the reigning to be literal on earth, or physical? Should one passage in a symbolical context be used to come to conclusions completely contrary to clear truths taught in other places in doctrinal contexts?

Notice another usage that obviously is *symbolic* of the number 1000 in poetical or prophetic contexts.

1. **Leviticus 26:8** – “⁸*Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase **ten thousand**, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.*”
2. **Deuteronomy 1:10-11** – “¹⁰*The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as **the stars of***

heaven. ¹¹ *May the LORD, the God of your fathers, **make you a thousand times as many as you are** and bless you, as he has promised you!*”

3. **Deuteronomy 7:9** – “⁹*Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, **to a thousand generations,**”*
4. **Deuteronomy 32:30** – “³⁰*How could one have chased a **thousand**, and two have put **ten thousand** to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had given them up?”*
5. **Job 9:3** – “³*If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a **thousand times.**”*
6. **Psalms 50:10** – “¹⁰*For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a **thousand hills.**”*
7. **Psalms 84:10** – “¹⁰*For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”*
8. **Psalms 90:4** – “⁴*For a **thousand years** in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.”*
9. **Psalms 91:7** – “⁷*A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.”*
10. **Psalms 105:8** – “⁸*He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a **thousand generations.**”*
11. **Song of Solomon 4:4** – “⁴*Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a **thousand shields**, all of them shields of warriors.”*
12. **Isaiah 7:23** – “²³*In that day every place where there used to be a **thousand** vines, worth a **thousand** shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns.”*
13. **Isaiah 60:22** – “²²*The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it.”*
14. **Daniel 7:10** – “¹⁰*A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a **thousand thousands** served him, and **ten thousand times ten thousand** stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.”*
15. **1 Corinthians 4:15** – “¹⁵*For though you have **ten thousand** instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”*

16. **2 Peter 3:8** – “⁸*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as **a thousand years**, and a thousand years as one day.*
17. **Revelation 20:2** – “²*And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for **a thousand years**,*”
18. **Revelation 20:3** – “³*and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the **thousand** years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*”
19. **Revelation 20:4** – “⁴*Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for **a thousand** years.*”
20. **Revelation 20:5** – “⁵*The rest of the dead did not come to life until **the thousand** years were ended. This is the first resurrection.*”
21. **Revelation 20:6** – “⁶*Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for **a thousand** years.*”
22. **Revelation 20:7** – “⁷*And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison.*”
23. **Revelation 7:4** – “⁴*And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an **hundred and forty and four thousand** of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*”
 - a. Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned though it is said “from every tribe”!
24. **Revelation 21:15-16** – “¹⁵*And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. ¹⁶And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, **twelve thousand furlongs**. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*”

Why those who take the *one thousand* years of **Revelation 20** to be literal do not take too, literally, the *one thousand* year and the number *one thousand* shown in the passages above? Were is their consistency? Do they believe that the city has “**twelve thousand furlongs**” literally? Certainly not. Then why the word *thousand* here for them it is **figurative** and then in **Revelation 20** it is **literal**” But men like Mr. Stewart, who

think that they have the right and authority to call others fools, idiots, etc., can decide themselves (they think) what is to be taken literal and what is to be taken figurative. They are not ready to let God's Word interpret itself.

They do not care what the inspired apostle says: *“²⁰Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21).*

THEN WHY BRING CHRIST BACK AGAIN ON EARTH?

The teaching of those who believe what Mr. Stewart is teaching makes the first coming of Christ *a complete failure*.

In **Galatians 4** and **Ephesians 1** the apostle Paul plainly declared that Jesus Christ came in the fullness of time for the purpose of redeeming the race.

But if Mr. Stewart is true that whole thing was a false alarm and the first coming of Christ *fulfilled nothing*—all of the prophecies being automatically deferred and postponed.

1. The Time Appointed Was Complete:

- a. We read in **Galatians 4:1-5** – *“¹Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ²but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. ³Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*
- b. **Ephesians 1:7-11** – *“⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”*

The first verses of Galatians 4 follow immediately the argument of the third chapter on the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises.

The conclusion in the **last verse of chapter 3** that all “*in Christ*” are the seed of Abraham and are heirs according to the promise connects with the first verse of the fourth chapter, with the “heir,” the “promise,” and “the time appointed,” and Paul says the first coming of Christ was the “fullness” of that time.

Mr. Stewart and all those who agree with him, either denies **Galatians 4**, that the first coming of Christ was the fullness of time, or else charges that after appointing the time, ***God failed to keep the appointment, backed by the word of His oath.***

2. His Mission of Redemption is Complete:

- a. **John 17:4** – “*I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.*”
- b. **Ephesians 1:1-10** – “¹*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*”
- c. **Colossians 1:13-14** – “¹³*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*”
- d. **Hebrews 9:12** – “*Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*”
- e. “***He entered the Most Holy Place once for all...***” Is He going to come out again, from the Most Holy Place, then? “***Once and for all***” does not mean that He is going to come again “*on earth*” to rule again because He had “***obtained eternal redemption.***”

3. His Revelation Is Complete:

- a. **Ephesians 3:1-11** – *“¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,⁴ by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:⁶ that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,⁹ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;¹⁰ to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,”*
- b. **Jude 1:3** – *“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly **for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.**”*

4. His Authority Is Complete:

- a. **Matthew 28:18** – *“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”***
- b. **Ephesians 1:20-23** – *“Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.²² **And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,**²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*

5. His Kingdom Is Complete:

- a. **Colossians 1:13** – “¹³*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.*”
- b. **Hebrews 12:28** – “²⁸*Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.*”
- c. **2 Timothy 4:1** – “¹*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.*”

The judgment will be according to the kingdom, according to the law of His kingdom:

- a. **Romans 2:16** – “*In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*”
- b. **2 Thessalonians 1:8** – “*In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

6. His Throne Is Complete:

- a. **Hebrews 4:14** – “*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*”
- b. **Hebrews 1:8** – “*But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom.”*”

7. His Name Is Complete:

- a. **Ephesians 1:22** – “*And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.*”
- b. **Colossians 3:17** – “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*”
- c. **Philippians 2:9-11** – “*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

8. His Glory Is Complete:

- a. **1 Peter 1:20-21** – “*He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ²¹who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the*

dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

- b. **John 17:5** – *“⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”*

9. His Work On Earth is Complete:

- a. **John 4:34** – *“Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, **and to finish His work.**”*
- b. **John 17:4** – *“I have glorified You on the earth. **I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.**”*

10. At the End—In Christ We Are Complete:

- a. **Colossians 2:10** – *“And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”*

11. No Longer On Earth:

- a. **John 17:11** – *“Now **I am no longer in the world**, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are ”*
- b. **Acts 1:9** – *“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, **He was taken up**, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”*
- c. **1 Thessalonians 4:17** – *“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. **And thus we shall always be with the Lord.**”*
- d. **2 Corinthians 5:16** – *“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, **yet now we know Him thus no longer.**”*

12. Then Why Bring Him Back.

There is nothing more for Jesus to do on earth! When Jesus comes again, He comes not to rule from earth but *to take us with Him in heaven!* Listen to what He tells us:

- a. **John 14:1-3** – *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.³And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.**”*

From these words from the Lord's mouth, one can see very clearly how mistaken is that teaching that the Lord is going to rule on earth from Jerusalem for a thousand years. Our Lord tells us: "...**that where I am, there you may be also.**" Jesus is in Heaven and not on earth!

Jesus did not went to *Jerusalem to prepare a place for us but he went to heaven*. These words agree perfectly with His words that we read in **Matthew 5:12** – "*Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven,...*"

They agree, too, with what we read in **1 Peter 1:3-4** – "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.*"

And with what we also read in **Philippians 3:20-21** – "*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*"

So, as Christian, let us : "*Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven,...*" (**Matthew 5:12**).

Mr. Stewart says, "Satan will be bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:3).

MY ANSWER:

This is another big error that Mr. Stewart makes, that he believes *that Satan is NOT bound at the present time*. But if he let the Bible interpret itself he will know if Satan is bound or not. This shows to me that Mr. Stewart reads only those passages that are tuned to his ears! Let us see.

We believe that the millennium described in **Revelation 20** is the period of time between the first and second advents of Christ. Hence, we now live in the millennium as I have already explained about us being priests and reigning with Christ, according to Revelation 20:6. (see page 54). And, if you read **Revelation 20** you can see that Satan *was bound* at the beginning of the millennium. Thus, we interpret that to mean that Satan was bound during the first advent of Christ.

This is what is objectionable to many. Exegetical concerns aside, the main reason most people, like Mr. Stewart, have trouble believing that Satan is bound is because they see so much evidence of his activity on the earth today. From looking around, it appears that Hal Lindsey was right – Satan is alive and well on planet earth.

Sometimes we get mocked when we say that Satan is bound, or at least people say “*yes right, he sure doesn’t look bound to me.*”

But our contention is simply that believing Satan to be bound is the result of using a consistently literal hermeneutic when it comes to interpreting all of Scripture. By literal we mean that we interpret the literal, literally and the figurative figuratively. Also, the literal should interpret the figurative. Along with this we believe *the clear should interpret the unclear, and the new should interpret the old.*

Before I flesh this out let me use an analogy that I think is almost exactly parallel. The rationale for saying Satan is not bound is that the presence of Satanic activity on earth rules out the notion that Satan could be bound.

Having said that, who here believes they are dead to sin? Raise your hand if you believe this? The Bible states absolutely and unequivocally that we are dead to sin.

Romans 6:2 – “*We died to sin*”

Romans 6:6-7 – “⁶*For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—*⁷*because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*”

Galatians 6:24: – Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

And yet, I still sin every day. There is ample evidence to me and anyone who looks around that I sin. And yet, the Bible says I am dead to sin. Paul himself writes in **Romans 6** that he is dead to sin and in **Romans 7** he writes about his ongoing struggle with sin.

My point is that, if we say Satan cannot be bound because we see so much Satanic activity, then we need to argue just as strongly against these statements in Romans and Galatians which say that we have died to sin.

But nobody does that. We affirm the truth of these verses – that we are dead to sin, while interpreting them in the light of other Scriptures that speak of our ongoing struggle with sin. Whatever the details of your particular exegesis of these Scriptures or mine, we come out with something affirming that there is a sense in which we can be dead to sin, and yet still sin.

We say the same thing about Satan. There is a very real sense in which he can be bound, yet active.

That Satan is bound is so clear from the New Testament that I am frankly surprised that anyone would argue otherwise. Maybe Mr. Stewart skip those verses in the New Testament that talk about this. It may be that we completely misunderstand (or twist) **Revelation 20**, but when it comes to the larger question of the binding of Satan, the burden of proof is not on us to prove he is, it is on our critics to prove that he isn’t.

A classic passage on this is **Matthew 12:25-29** – “²⁵ *Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.”*”

Notice the parallel between **vv. 25-28** and **verse 29**. The binding of the strong man in **verse 29** is analogous to Jesus’ casting out of Satan by the Spirit of God. There is a ton of eschatological meaning in this passage and it goes beyond particular instances of demonic deliverance. It is a paradigm for the coming of the kingdom of God. The fact that Jesus casts out demons by the Spirit of God is evidence that a) *Satan has been bound, and more importantly* b) the eschatological *kingdom of God has come upon us*.

So, the point is that the coming of the kingdom entails the binding of Satan. The timing of the coming of the kingdom is given here. It is not a time somewhere in the future – it is at the time that Jesus demonstrates His binding of Satan by casting out demons. This happened at His first advent.

This is seen more clearly in several other passages.

In **John 12:31**, predicting His death, Jesus says this: “³¹ *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.*”

Please notice that, and notice the parallel to **Revelation 20:1-3**. Jesus says “**now** the prince of this world will be driven out.” Who is the prince of world? Satan. Where is he being driven from? It has to be this world. In **Revelation 20** the angel comes down out of heaven to seize Satan, so in **Revelation 20** it appears that Satan is on the earth when he is bound. In **John 12:31** Satan is driven out of this world. And, according to **John 12:31**, when is Satan to be driven out (bound)? At the time of the crucifixion. Satan is bound by the cross of Christ. There the serpent’s head was crushed and the forces of evil routed. So certain was Christ of victory as He went to His cross that He could say emphatically, “**now** the prince of this world will be driven out.”

Of course Satan is still a dangerous enemy. A dog on a chain is circumscribed in its movement, but within that sphere it can be dangerous. So it is with Satan. His movement is restricted by a sovereign God – as the book of Job makes clear – but the Christian is nevertheless exhorted to wear the armour of God. Only thus can he “quench the fiery darts of the evil one”

(**Ephesians 6:16**)...Scripture strikes a careful balance between presenting Satan as “bound”, yet as dangerous as a hungry lion (**1 Peter 5:8**).

Colossians 2:15 says: “*And having **disarmed** the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*”

At the cross Christ **disarmed** the powers and authorities and triumphed over them. It wasn't the Roman or Jewish authorities He disarmed, it was the satanic, spiritual powers and authorities. I realize that “binding” and “disarming” are two different words, but they both have the same idea of defeat and subjection to Christ.

Hebrews 2:14-15 says: “¹⁴*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil**—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*”

As in **Colossians 2:15**, **Hebrews 2:15** says that something happened to Satan **at the cross**. In Colossians Satan was disarmed, in **Hebrews 2** we see that Satan was destroyed. Again, the word “destroy” is not the same word as “bind” but the idea is the same – Satan is defeated and subjected to Christ on the cross.

1 John 3:8 says: “*...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*”

Here we see that the Son of God “appeared” – past tense. This appearance was at His first advent. What did He do at His first appearance? He destroyed the devil's work.

All of this is to simply say that *we must let the Scriptures interpret our experience, not the other way around*. Again, the objection that is raised against our view of the binding of Satan is that our experience tells us otherwise. I am trying to show that the Bible is very clear, apart from **Revelation 20**, that **Satan is bound**, and *we need to interpret our experience in light of the Bible, not vice versa* as is being done by those who believe contrary.

So, if one puts the idea in the argument against us that Satan cannot be bound because our experience tells us differently, then that idea needs to be removed.

On a larger note though, this does give an example of our contention that *we ought to interpret Revelation in light of the whole of Scripture, not the other way around*. When we look at the whole of Scripture we see that it is very clear that Satan was bound at the first advent of Jesus. So, when we see **Revelation 20** talking about Satan being bound and cast out of the earth we say hmm . . . All of those other passages, and especially **John 12:31** insinuate that Satan was cast out of the earth during the first advent of Jesus, maybe there is a correlation.

Now, let us be clear about this. Satan “bound” does not mean inactive. It means that his activity *is restricted* here in this Christian age. It means that he can’t stop the Gospel from going forth, he is being restrained from exercising all that he is capable of exercising.

You may disagree on these particulars – some may think that our description of “binding” sounds too weak, i.e. Satan doesn’t seem to be very bound. But I will push you back to the very strong language of Scripture describing what happened to Satan at the first advent – he was bound, disarmed, destroyed and cast out. The Scripture itself can use that strong of language while acknowledging the continued activity of Satan.

We should trust God to deliver us from the “*snare of the fowler*” if we are unconsciously in it, for of course Satan does not tell us of his snares. “*The whole armour of God*” (**Ephesians 6:11**) *is also necessary, and that we be “sober and watch unto prayer”* (**1 Peter 4:7**). **Christ has defeated** these “*principalities and powers*” (**Colossians 2:15; Ephesians 1:21**), and can easily instruct us as to their activities and lead us on in victory. Can Scripture be more clear?

So I conclude by restating that, though Satan may still be active, *the Scripture is unmistakably clear that he is bound* and we are to interpret our experience in light of this rather than the other way around.

Mr. David J. Stewart says:

No Eternal Security?

The Church of Christ minister also said that he believed a saved person COULD lose their salvation if they got away from fellowship with the Lord. I asked him if all Church of Christ followers believed the same doctrines he did and he affirmed, YES. He laughed in my face when I told him that the Bible was clear that a saved person could NEVER lose their salvation. I mean, Jesus told Nicodemus to be “born again,” NOT born again and again and again and again! Revelation 3:20 is an invitation for us to open the door of our heart to allow the Lord Jesus to come in (John 14:23).

Church of Christ folks evidently have a problem with Christians who are less than perfect. The minister was perplexed when I told him that a Christian could commit murder and still be saved. He almost became angry. His problem is that he has a WRONG view of salvation (which is why I believe he is NOT really saved).

MY ANSWER:

Again, Mr. Stewart authorized himself and made himself the judge: “*which is why I believe he is NOT really saved*” he said about our brother in Christ. What you believe (your opinion), Mr. Stewart, is of no importance as long as it is not according to God’s truth.

I agree that a Christian could commit murder and still be saved BUT ONLY **IF HE REPENTS!**

Matthew 12:31 – “Wherefore I say unto you, **All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men:** but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”

Yes, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven but *if the sinner does not repent*, will it be forgiven, Mr. Stewart?

Ezekiel 33:18,19 – “God tells us, **WHEN THE RIGHTEOUS TURNETH FROM HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jesus, his faith), AND COMMITTETH INIQUITY, HE SHALL EVEN DIE THEREBY (go to hell). BUT IF THE WICKED TURN FROM HIS WICKEDNESS (repents), AND DO THAT WHICH IS LAWFUL AND RIGHT, HE SHALL LIVE THEREBY.**”

These people thought they could *not* lose salvation the same as you think, Mr. Stewart. God seems to be displeased that they thought, “once saved, always saved.” He speaks through Ezekiel with words that seem to explode:

(17) – “THY PEOPLE SAY, THE WAY OF THE LORD IS NOT EQUAL: BUT AS FOR THEM, THEIR WAY IS NOT EQUAL.”

These words are for every person who believes “once saved, always saved.” The way of God, once you surrender to Jesus, is all your sins are erased. They are not remembered. **But, if** you turn back to sin (turn from your faith), all your good deeds are equally not remembered. God’s ways are totally just.

Ezekiel 3:20 – “**IF RIGHTEOUS MAN DOETH TURN FROM HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND COMMIT INIQUITY...HE SHALL DIE IN HIS SIN, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH HE HATH DONE SHALL NOT BE REMEMBERED.**”

Once you are saved, if you fall away, then you need *to repent*. Isaiah also shows us,

Isaiah 63:8-10 – “**HE WAS THEIR SAVIOUR...HE REDEEMED THEM...BUT THEY REBELLED...HE WAS TURNED TO BE THEIR ENEMY.**”

Mr. Stewart accuses us of the church of Christ that we “do not take the Bible at face value? Why do we persist to read in-between the lines?” (see p. 42.) And at that time he was talking about symbolic language. But now, Mr. Stewart, are you ready to take the words of Ezekiel and Isaiah (and the rest that I am going to quote) at face value? I think that for people to take the Bible at face value does not apply to Mr. Stewart at this point! These are not symbolic language but very clear language that all can understand easily.

Moses knew you could lose salvation. He besought God saying,

Exodus 32:32,33 – “YET NOW, IF THOU WILT, FORGIVE THEIR SIN; AND IF NOT, BLOT ME, I PRAY THEE, OUT OF THY BOOK

WHICH THOU HAST WRITTEN. AND THE LORD SAID UNTO MOSES, **WHOSOEVER HATH SINNED AGAINST ME, HIM WILL I BLOT OUT OF MY BOOK.**"

David knew you could lose salvation. He prayed, "LET THEM BE BLOTTED OUT OF THE BOOK OF THE LIVING." (Psalm 69:28). If your name is in the book of life, you are saved. If your name is *blotted out*, you lose your salvation. No matter what Mr. Stewart believes, they still will remain blotted out and you lose your salvation. It is written:

2 Chronicles 15:2 – "BUT IF YE FORSAKE HIM (*the Lord*), **HE WILL FORSAKE YOU.**"

Matthew 5:13 – "YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH (*saved*): BUT IF THE SALT HAVE LOST HIS SAVOR (that distinctive quality which sets apart or makes a difference between a saved person and an unsaved person)...**IT IS THENCEFORTH GOOD FOR NOTHING.**"

John 15:1, 2, 6 – "I AM THE TRUE VINE...EVERY BRANCH IN ME (*every saved person in Christ Jesus*) THAT BEARETH NOT FRUIT (*will not serve Jesus or do the will of God*) **HE TAKETH AWAY...AND CAST THEM INTO THE FIRE.**"

Mr. Stewart (and all those who agree with you) are you taking these Scriptures at face value? The *Holy Spirit* (not Mr. Stewart or myself) says:

1 Timothy 4:1 – "^lNow the *Spirit speaketh expressly*, that in the latter times **SOME SHALL DEPART FROM THE FAITH**, giving heed to *seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*"

They are saved, but *depart from faith* in Christ. Do you agree with the Holy Spirit, Mr. Stewart, or not? I agree perfectly with Him. To "*depart from the faith*" means that you were IN the faith and not that they never were saved! Again, Satan uses his cunningness to deceive others but telling them that they never were saved! And many people prefer to believe Satan and not God's Word.

It is written, "**YE ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE**" (Galatians 5:4). There are those, like Mr. Stewart, who say this does not mean what it says. They interpret it to mean that the people are fallen away from the message of grace. *God will justly recompense to all who misuse the Word.* Mr. Stewart believes that we are "SAVED THROUGH FAITH" (Eph 2:8). Now, if you turn from your faith (seek to be justified by circumcision, thus a debtor to the Law), you are not standing by faith. You are fallen from grace. You lost your salvation.

Hebrews 10:38 – "³⁸Now the just shall live by faith: **but if** any man **draw back**, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Revelation 2:4, 5 – Jesus says, "I HAVE SOMEWHAT AGAINST THEE, BECAUSE THOU HAST LEFT THY FIRST LOVE. REMEMBER

THEREFORE FROM WHENCE THOU ART FALLEN, AND REPENT...OR ELSE I WILL COME UNTO THEE QUICKLY, AND WILL REMOVE THY CANDLESTICK OUT OF HIS PLACE, EXCEPT THOU REPENT.”

Sinner, if you are fallen—**repent** quickly—before your name is removed from the book. It can be removed, because if not, as Mr. Stewart believes, then *why* the admonition?

Paul said, “I KEEP UNDER MY BODY, AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION: LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS, WHEN I HAVE PREACH-ED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY.” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Paul knew we could lose salvation as also exemplified in the following. “BEHOLD THEREFORE THE GOODNESS...OF GOD...**IF** THOU CONTINUE IN HIS GOODNESS: **OTHERWISE THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF**” (if you do not continue in faith and *obeying* the Gospel, you shall be **cut off**). “**AND THEY ALSO, IF THEY ABIDE NOT STILL IN UNBELIEF, SHALL BE GRAFTED IN: FOR GOD IS ABLE TO GRAFT THEM IN AGAIN**” (Romans 11:22, 23).

They can be saved, but fall into unbelief and lose salvation. However, *if they repent*, God can save them again. One have to notice the word “**IF**.”

It is written, “BY THIS GOSPEL YOU ARE SAVED, **IF** YOU HOLD FIRMLY TO THE WORD... OTHERWISE YOU HAVE BELIEVED IN VAIN” (1 Corinthians 15:2). You may be saved, but **IF** you turn from the Word (from Jesus), it is all for nothing. You have believed in vain.

Over and over, the Bible warns us that once we are saved *we need to be careful, take heed, examine ourselves, be sure we do not fall back into unbelief and return to sin*. You are free. You have liberty. Nevertheless, if once you are saved, you go back into unbelief, wilful sin, or refuse to do the will of God—**and do not repent**: *you will perish from the way, become shipwreck, and be cast into the fire*. This is what God’s Words says and not what Mr. Stewart believes.

The inspired apostle Paul warned God’s people of the danger of falling:

1 Corinthians 10:12 – “*Wherefore, LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL.*”

Mr. Stewart, I think that I stand, but I take heed lest I fall, and I do this because God’s Word tells me to do this and not the “once saved always saved” proponents. (read Acts 5:29). I trust in God and not in men!

The parable of the seed tells of those who, “**WHEN THEY HEAR, RECEIVE THE WORD WITH JOY** (they become saved, but) **IN TIME OF TEMPTATION FALL AWAY**” (Luke 8:13).

It is written, too, “**AND THROUGH THY KNOWLEDGE SHALL THE WEAK BROTHER PERISH, FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED?**” (1 Corinthians 8:11).

Do you agree with the inspired Paul, Mr. Stewart, that the weak **BROTHER** can **PERISH**? Are you ready to take this at face value, as you have suggested that we do? (see p. 42).

Peter also cautions Christians, that, “**IF AFTER THEY HAVE ESCAPED THE POLLUTIONS OF THE WORLD THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST (they are saved), THEY ARE AGAIN ENTANGLED THEREIN, AND OVERCOME (they return to their evil ways), THE LATTER END IS WORSE WITH THEM THAN THE BEGINNING. FOR IT HAD BEEN BETTER FOR THEM NOT TO HAVE KNOWN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (it had been better not to have known Jesus), THAN, AFTER THEY HAVE KNOWN IT (after they are saved), TO TURN FROM THE HOLY COMMANDMENT DELIVERED UNTO THEM (to turn from Jesus, from the Word). BUT IT IS HAPPENED UNTO THEM ACCORDING TO THE TRUE PROVERB, THE DOG IS TURNED TO HIS OWN VOMIT AGAIN; AND THE SOW THAT WAS WASHED (a person is clean or washed by the blood of Jesus) TO HER WALLING IN THE MIRE**” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Please, Mr. Stewart, can you tell us how to take this passage *at face value*? Observe the identity of these people and the final results, how different they are from what Mr. Stewart is teaching:

1. They escaped the defilements of the world.
2. They escaped through the knowledge of Christ.
3. They *turned* from the holy commandments.
4. They may *again* become entangled and *overcome*.
5. ***The last state becomes worse than the first.***

If one is sincere and truly wants to accept God’s Word and not man’s, could there possibly be any doubt about the possibility of a child of God being lost in view of these inspired declarations? Surely not!

Yet, there are religious leaders, like Mr. Stewart, who would have us believe that it is impossible for a child of God to fall away and be lost. Imagine, an *unrepented* murderer is saved in Heaven! That is what Mr. Stewart believes! (1 John 3:14-15). See page 102.

How many pastors who believe of the “once saved always saved” theory are in jail at the present time, for murder, rape, theft, etc.? If they *do not repent*, will they still be saved, Mr. Stewart? According to the false teaching of Mr. Stewart, they do not need to repent because all the time they are saved, they can never be lost! Some of them even have the title of Reverend before their name, Mr. Stewart, which is a title (name) only due to God (Psalm 111:9). I am not saying that only pastors or members from

the Baptist Church are in jail, I am sure that from all denominations and even from the church of Christ people commit such crimes, but to say that once saved, (eternal security) always saved is Satan's teaching.

If your name is in the book of life, I am sure that Mr. Stewart would agree that you are saved. However, ***IF*** "***ANY MAN SHALL TAKE AWAY FROM THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF THIS PROPHECY, GOD SHALL TAKE AWAY HIS PART OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE***" (this person will lose salvation) (**Revelation 22:19**). "***Take away his part out of the book of life***" does not this mean that the one who's part will be taken away by God was a saved person? If not, then his part was already out of the book of life! It will be without sense to *take away his part out of the book of life* when his part was NEVER in the book of life!

God's Word gives a warning to all that teach "once saved, always saved" and do not acknowledge that a person can indeed turn from and forsake the Lord and perish. For they are, in effect, saying, "THE WAY OF THE LORD IS NOT EQUAL: (note the Lord's response to them) ***BUT AS FOR THEM, THEIR WAY IS NOT EQUAL***" (**Ezekiel 33:17**).

There is no worry about losing salvation to those *who abide in the will of God*. If you turn from your faith, from God's will, ***you are worse off than when you began***; however, you can ***repent*** and return. God's ways are equal. But only ***IF*** you *repent* of your sin.

There are more than 2,500 warnings in the Bible against man's falling away. We are warned and exhorted to be diligent in serving God, lest we fall away and be lost.

If the doctrine that Mr. Stewart believes in, that is, of impossibility of apostasy were true, then man is merely a machine. He cannot fall. ***Before*** conversion he could do nothing to be saved. ***After*** conversion he can do nothing to be lost. According to the false teaching of men, if a man is lost in eternity it will be because of God's fault and not man's fault. Can you imagine that? Impossible!

Almighty God has solemnly warned that ***if*** His people forsake Him then God will forsake man. ***If*** man does not forsake God, then God will never forsake man.

Mr. Stewart (and those who agree with you), listen to the word of God:

1 Chronicles 28:9 – "⁹***And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.***"

Now hear God's warning:

2 Chronicles 15:2 – “²And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.”

Mr. Stewart said about the minister of the church of Christ: “The minister was perplexed when I told him that a Christian could commit murder and still be saved.”

Question: Is committing murder **sin**? For Mr. Stewart it is not because how can one be saved while still in sin? We believe what God tells us in His Word and not what Mr. Stewart says:

Ezekiel 18:20-24 – “²⁰*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.* ²¹*But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, **he shall not die.*** ²²*All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.* ²³*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?* ²⁴***But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.***”

God tells us that “*the righteous turneth away from his righteousness,*” is something *that can happen*. What is the question here? “**SHALL HE LIVE?**” Mr. Stewart’s answer is YES HE SHALL LIVE! But how different is God’s answer, listen to God’s answer: “*All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, **IN THEM HE SHALL DIE.***” Language could hardly be plainer, Mr. Stewart.

Hebrews 3:12 – “¹²*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*”

Hebrews 6:4-6 – “⁴*For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.*”

First, TAKE HEED BRETHERN (not those who never were saved, but brethren).

Second, notice the description of the children of God:

6. Once enlightened.
7. Have tasted of the heavenly gift.
8. Were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.
9. Have tasted the good word of God.
10. Tasted the powers of the age to come.

What better identity of a child of God could one find? Yet, inspiration declares: “*the have fallen away.*” Mr. Stewart says that all this is not true. He says that they cannot fall away! Whom do you believe, Mr. Stewart or the Holy Spirit?

I can go on and on quoting Scriptures that show how false is the doctrine of “eternal security” and “once saved always saved.” But what we have seen above should be enough to show the *honest* student of the Bible how wrong are those doctrines.

May we, as God’s children, be faithful and diligent, even faithful unto death, that we may receive the “crown of life” (**Revelation 2:10**).

Mr. David J. Stewart says,

The Church of Christ has a wrong view of salvation! The truth is that we DO NOTHING to earn salvation! If we can't do any good works to get saved, then why would doing any bad works make us unsaved? I like that statement so I'll say it again...If we can't do any good works to get saved, then why would doing any bad works make us unsaved?

I did nothing to get saved of my own merit. All I did was place my faith in the Lord's work of atonement. It is Jesus Christ and what He did to pay for my sins that gets me into heaven, I had nothing to do with that. Salvation is OF GOD, not man! So then why in the world would anyone conclude that a person has to maintain a certain level of fellowship or righteousness with God to keep one's salvation? It is no less than a WORKS religion!

The Church of Christ is ADDING works to simple faith in Christ! They teach that you MUST be baptized to be saved! They teach that you MUST keep coming back to the Lord (to get your salvation back) every time you get away from the Lord. Listen folks, there is NOTHING in the Bible which teaches that we can fall from grace as believers. When the Bible speaks of "[falling from grace](#)" it is simply talking about unsaved people who have rejected Christ.

Jesus is the ONLY way to heaven! If you reject Jesus, then you have missed your ONLY buss ticket to heaven. This is the only way to fall from God’s grace.

You CANNOT lose your salvation!!! If someone is not saved now, then they never were to begin with. As a perfect analogy, I cannot change the relationship between my and my own child. I could disown my child (which I think is a horrible thing for ANY parent to do), but they would still be my child. Even if my child killed

someone, the relationship doesn't change one bit -that is still my child and I am still their parent.

Such is this case with God! No matter what we do, we are God's children. If you would like to KNOW your saved.

MY ANSWER:

Mr. Stewart says that the church of Christ has a wrong view of salvation! The truth is that we DO NOTHING to earn salvation! But either he forgot what he has just said a few lines before or he really wants to deceive his readers. He quoted **Revelation 3:20** where he says that "*it is an invitation for us to open the door of our heart to allow the Lord Jesus to come in*" (**John 14:23**). (Emphasis mine).

Revelation 3:20 says: "²⁰*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone** hears my voice **and opens the door**, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*"

My question: Mr. Stewart, who opens the door to allow the Lord Jesus to come in"? Who? The answer is, and I am sure that you agree with me, "It was **I** who opened the door. But according to your mistaken ideas is that "The truth is that we DO NOTHING to earn salvation!" **NOTHING** means not even OPENNING THE DOOR TO THE LORD! Jesus says "**IF ANYONE**" OPENS THE DOOR. And if **I** do not open the door, because you tell me that I can do NOTHING what will happen? Will the Lord come in?

Again, in **Revelation 22:17** we are told: "¹⁷*The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*"

Question: How "*can one who is thirsty and desires*" **go** if he can do NOTHING? If he goes then he is DOING something. But if he does not go because some religious leader tell him that he can DO NOTHING, what will happen to him? Will he be saved, just the same, Mr. Stewart?

Question: What if Naaman the leper obeyed you instead of God's prophet to go and **dip himself seven time** in the river, would he have been healed (**2 Kings 5:1-14**)? What if the blind man of **John 9** obeyed you by saying to himself: I can DO NOTHING to be cured instead of obeying Jesus' command, would he have been healed? Please give us your answer?

Now, Mr. Stewart, what is "our only bus ticket" that you mentioned? It is true that it is Jesus but what Jesus says for us TO DO to be given that bus ticket?

Hebrews 5:9 – "⁹*And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who **obey him.***"

Matthew 21:24, 26 – “²⁴Everyone then who hears these words of mine and **does them** will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not do them** will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.”

Galatians 6:9 – “⁹And let us not grow weary of **doing** good, for in due season we will reap, **if** we do not give up.”

And **IF** we give up, what happens, Mr. Stewart? Nothing?

James 1:22-25 – “²²But be **doers** of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word **and not a doer**, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets **but a doer who acts**, he will be **blessed in his doing**.”

Question: When I am OBEYING a command given by Jesus, am I DOING something or not? Have you ever OBEYED a command of Jesus, Mr. Stewart, or you say to yourself that you CAN DO NOTHING just sit and wait for the Lord to save you? You see, how you are contradicting yourself, Mr. Stewart. “**But a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing**.” That is what we teach, Mr. Stewart, or this is a heresy, too!

Mr. Stewart is trying to deceive his readers by telling them: “I did nothing to get saved of my own merit.” We do not say that we do things that by them we merit our own salvation. **That is a big lie** who is using Satan and his disciples. **We can NEVER merit our own salvation**. But we have to OBEY, OBEY, OBEY *Jesus’ commands to be saved*. Do you believe, Mr. Stewart, that Jesus “*became the source of eternal salvation to all **who OBEY him***”? Not of those who believe (only) in Him! That is what we believe. These are the words of the Holy Spirit and not mine, Mr. Stewart. “*Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not **DO**...*”

Again Mr. Stewart lies about us by saying that we “teach that you **MUST** keep coming back to the Lord (to get your salvation back) every time you get away from the Lord.” Do you pray to God, in Jesus’ name to forgive you of your sins, Mr. Stewart (**Matthew 6:9-15**), or you believe that you never sin? Or that God is at your convenience to serve you any time you sin? Why you ask God to forgive you of your sins, if you are once saved always saved? That is what we believe, that when we sin we ask God to forgive us of our sins. Be honest and sincere to your readers, Mr. Stewart!

1 John 1:7-10 – “⁷But **if** we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸**If** we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹**If** we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰**If** we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

1 John 2:1-3 – “¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But **if** anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ³And by this we know that we have come to know him, **if** we keep his commandments.”

What happens if someone does not confess his sins? The small word “**IF**” shows that there is the possibility of NOT confessing our sins.

Mr. Stewart says: “So then why in the world would anyone conclude that a person has to maintain a certain level of fellowship or righteousness with God to keep one's salvation? It is no less than a WORKS religion!”

“⁷But **if** we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Yes, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin **IF we walk in the light.**” God’s Word gives you the answer and shows to you how wrong you are! **IF, IF, IF**, Mr. Stewart!

Listen to what Paul says, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Mr. Stewart, as usual, accuses us of being “no less than a WORKS religion!”

A misconception of Mr. Stewart is the belief that even after we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour our works have no merit before God.

It is true we are “*saved by grace alone*” and not by any works which we can do. When we put our faith in Christ and **obey** His commands, (to believe, repent, confess Him as our Lord, and be baptized for the remission of sins) we are declared righteous by God because of Christ and not because of our works. ***Our deeds before conversion are of no merit*** in the sight of God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that no of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*”

Anyone who believes that he can be saved because of human effort, will be tragically disappointed for all of eternity. However, once we have receive the free gift of eternal life, *works* are important to God.

Notice the verse following **Ephesians 2:9**, that is, **verse 10**. After affirming that we are saved by faith because of God’s grace, Paul continues, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good*

works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” God seeks works in our life that will honour Him. We should strive to please Him, and for such works we will be rewarded. We shy away from thinking that something we do has merit, Christ did not hesitate to promise that those who performed sacrificial acts would be “repaid” (**Luke 14:12-14**). Our works do not have merit in and of themselves; *they have merit only because we are joined to Christ*. Christ takes our imperfect works and makes them acceptable to the Father. It isn’t that God must pay us like an employer who has a legal obligation to pay his employee. Our good deeds are done only because God gives us the desire and the ability to do them. They are a gift of God’s grace to us. But Mr. Stewart does not want to see this.

All believers will not pass the judgment seat of Christ with flying colours. The phrase, “*whether good or bad,*” rids us of the cherished hope that our unconfessed failures can never return to haunt us. There will be those who have been redeemed, eternally forgiven and have salvation, however, we cannot Scripturally conclude that every Christian will do well as the Judgment Seat of Christ. We can “*suffer lost!*” There will be those who “*stand in shame before Christ*” as they see their life pass before them. Those who think that the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a ten minute confrontation, with little significance ... (that all Christians will essentially receive the reward) ... will have a rude awakening. What happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ will have permanent consequences.

Now, let God’s Word give the answer maybe Mr. Stewart and all those who follow his false teaching will open their eyes:

Titus 3:1 – “^d*Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.*”

Matthew 5:16 – “¹⁶*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*”

Acts 9:36 – “³⁶*Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.*”

Romans 2:6-8 – “⁶*He will render to each one according to his works:* ⁷*to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life;* ⁸*but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*”

Ephesians 2:8-10 – “⁸*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* ⁹*not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* ¹⁰*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*”

Colossians 1:10 – “¹⁰*so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*”

2 Corinthians 9:8 – “⁸*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*”

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 – “¹⁶*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.*”

1 Timothy 5:10 – “¹⁰*and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.*”

2 Timothy 2:21 – “²¹*Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonourable, he will be a vessel for honourable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.*”

Hebrews 10:23-24 – “²³*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,*”

James 3:13 – “¹³*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.*”

James 2:20-26 – “²⁰*Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*”

At least the Holy Spirit who inspired James to write these clear verses is not calling us “foolish” because we believe that “*faith apart from works is useless*” and that “*faith was active along with works*” and that “*faith was completed by works*” and that “*a person is justified by works and not by faith alone*” and that “*faith apart from works is dead*” but to the contrary, He is calling “foolish” those who do not believe in works!

Are not these enough proof to show how wrong Mr. Stewart is in what he is teaching? No interpretations or opinions. We have God’s Word telling

us about this subject. We do not need anyone to give us his interpretations. We accept them *AT FACE VALUE*, Mr. Stewart. Are you ready to accept them *at face value*, now. You criticised my brother in Christ for not accepting those *symbolic* Scriptures at face value (see from p. 42). All these passages are not symbolic, so you should have no problem at all to accept them at face value and put aside the false teaching that you are teaching others.

Calvin agreed with Luther's criticisms of the Roman church, and with most of Luther's fundamental religious ideas, such as justification by *faith alone* and not by works. Mr. Stewart, too, agrees with Calvin and Luther but we agree with our beloved Lord Jesus Christ and not with men!

Again Mr. Stewart accuses the Lord by saying, "The Church of Christ is **ADDING** works to simple faith in Christ! They teach that you **MUST** be baptized to be saved!"

Question: Mr. Stewart, *were does the Bible say that baptism is a work?* If you are truly sincere and honest, please quote the book, chapter and verse only, we do not want your opinions and your interpretations. Opinions and personal interpretations have made a lot of damage to the Scriptures and many souls are getting lost because of them. Only Satan is rejoicing by all the false teachings that are being taught. All I want is a very simple answer: *book, chapter and verse*.

My answer will be, if I am asked that question, **NOWHERE!** I have explained in great detail about this so there is no need to repeat.

Who is **adding** works? Mr. Stewart said that we teach that you **MUST** be baptized to be saved? I tell you what we teach. We teach:

Matthew 28:19 – ¹⁸*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"*

Are we wrong, Mr. Stewart in teaching that a person has to be baptized "***in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit***"? This is a command given by our Lord, Mr. Stewart and not by Calvin or Luther!

Mark 16:15-16 – ¹⁵*And **he** said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes **and is baptized will be saved**, but whoever does not believe will be condemned"*

Mr. Stewart, do you know the meaning of the word "AND"? It is in your language, so you have to know it better than me. I am Maltese. If you look it up in a Dictionary, the meaning is this:

And – *conj.*

1. **Together with** or along with; **in addition to**; as well as. Used to connect words, phrases, or clauses that have the same grammatical function in a construction.

2. Added to; **plus**: Two and two makes four. (The Free dictionary) (Emphasis mine).

Now that you know the meaning of the word “and” will you continue to accuse the Lord of ADDING a word (baptism) to salvation?

Two **AND** two makes four, the example says in the dictionary. But Mr. Stewart says that two and two makes two, because the second ‘two’ should not be added to the first ‘two’. He says that baptism, which is after the ‘and’, should not be added to ‘believe’ which is before the ‘and’.

Mr. Stewart, let me make this clear, you are not disagreeing with me or the minister of the church of Christ that you elevated him with all kinds of titles, but you are disagreeing with the Lord. Argue with Him because to be baptized is **His command** and not ours. He will hear you, don’t worry. Why are you accusing us when baptism is not our command? Why? You are accusing the Lord, because it is HIS COMMAND! Whether you agree with us or not is of no importance. You have to agree with the Lord. Listen what Jesus says to those who do not obey his commands (and to be baptized is one of His commands):

John 12:48 – ⁴⁸*“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”*

“The word that I have spoken will judge you” Mr. Stewart, and will judge me, George Ebejer. Is the command to be baptized *“The word that I [Jesus] have spoken”*? My answer is, YES! What is your answer Mr. Stewart? If your answer is ‘yes’ then how can one be saved **before** obeying that command? (**Hebrews 5:9**). And if you do not obey that command by saying that one is saved **before** obedience to it, are you not going to be judged by the word that Jesus have spoken?

Question: Who is the **“HE”** who said to them: *“Whoever believes”*? Is he George Ebejer or some other minister of the church of Christ? Please answer me if you are truly honest and sincere?

It is the **“He”** who is COMMANDING **baptism**, don’t you agree Mr. Stewart? So is that **“HE”** ADDING *works* to simple faith in Him!

Matthew 28:18-19 – ¹⁸*“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”*

Here now we can be sure that we know who is the **“HE”** who commanded **“baptism.”** **“And JESUS.”** Note, Mr. Stewart that Jesus says that HE HAS ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.”

Now, Mr. Stewart, are you accusing Jesus of ADDING a work (*'baptism' in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*" to simple faith in *HIM*? I urge you, Mr. Stewart to read again **Acts 8:22-23**.

Mr. Stewart said that "If someone is not saved now, then they never were to begin with," and that If you are still in doubt about this false teaching, read again from page 66.

2 Peter 2:20-22 – ²⁰*For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.* ²¹*For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.* ²²*What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."*

I think that this passage is not in Mr. Stewart's Bible. It is missing from his version! It will be good idea for those who are following Mr. Stewart's teaching to read **Ephesians 5:6**.

Mr. David J. Stewart says,

"You CANNOT lose your salvation!!! If someone is not saved now, then they never were to begin with. As a perfect analogy, I cannot change the relationship between my and my own child. I could disown my child (which I think is a horrible thing for ANY parent to do), but they would still be my child. Even if my child killed someone, the relationship doesn't change one bit -that is still my child and I am still their parent. Such is this case with God! No matter what we do, we are God's children."

MY ANSWER:

What an analogy he gives. But I will let the Lord answer him and not myself.

Matthew 10:33 – *"But whoever disowns [denies] me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."*

2 Timothy 2:13 – ¹³*If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself."*

This verse is used by the once saved always saved proponents to show (according to them) that God will not deny (disown) us. But if one reads the verse carefully and without any bias he will find that it is teaching contrary to what men like Mr. Stewart are teaching. **It doesn't say He cannot deny us, but He cannot deny Himself.** God cannot go against His holy and righteous nature. *He cannot bless the wicked as if they were righteous*, and he cannot punish the righteous as if they were wicked. If he threatens to punish the wicked and they repent (as in the case of Nineveh in

the book of Jonah), He cannot carry out His threat. Likewise if He promises to bless the righteous and they turn from their righteousness (as in the case of Eli in **1 Samuel 2:30**), then He is absolved from His obligation to bless them. So simple and so just.

Jesus says our words will condemn or acquit us (**Matt. 12:37**). He also says—so will our thoughts (**Matt. 5:27-29**). **Titus 1:16** says actions deny God—even by those who claim to know Him! And what does **2 Tim. 2:12** say? It says, “*If we disown Him, He will disown us.*” This is very serious. And remember, Jesus used this word with Peter.

As Jesus warns in **Mark 8:38**, “*If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father’s glory with the holy angels.*”

And in **Matthew 10:32, 33**, “*Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven.*”

But again, Peter repented—thoroughly—which is an absolute necessity for all who deny Him—even once. Otherwise, on that Final Day, Jesus will in turn “*utterly deny*” the one standing before Him... to be judged.

Now If you are truly honest and sincere, read this and think deeply about what inspiration says.

Colossians 1:21-23 – “²¹*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,* ²²*he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,* ²³***if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard,** which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*”

Mr. Stewart, if I have eternal security, if I am once saved always saved, what is the use of this admonition to me?

1. ***IF indeed you continue in the faith.*** I have eternal security, I have no problem whether I continue in the faith or not, even if I commit murder (according to Mr. Stewart)!
2. ***Stable and steadfast.*** Why, Paul, you are telling me this, you know that I am saved and have nothing to worry about whether I continue “*stable and steadfast*”, because I am being told that even if I commit murder, still God will save me!
3. ***Not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.*** I think, that the apostle Paul does not know about the once saved always saved doctrine. Whether I shift from the hope of the gospel that I have heard or not, God will still save me.

One has to read his Bible carefully to be delivered from that fatal doctrine of “once saved, always saved” so that he will be really free from that fatal temptation to make light of sin. Fear it. Are you not afraid of going to Hellfire? You will find unrepented (Christian) murderers in Hell and not in Heaven, Mr. Stewart!

Maybe that is why Mr. Stewart thinks that he has a license, given to him by God, to call other people who are created in God’s image, “wolves in sheep clothing, stupid, Idiots, foolish, liars, woefully ignorant. Because he is assured (he thinks) of eternal security! But how wrong he is. And I am sure that his readers, know how wrong he is!

NOTHING UNCLEAN WILL ENTER HEAVEN – “¹⁵*Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood*” (Revelation 22:15).

Mr. David J. Stewart says,

No Tears in Heaven?

More heresy! This Church of Christ minister said there will be no tears in heaven. Well, he is wrong! Over and over we are warned in the Bible to be careful how we live as believers because we each shall give account to God. We are commanded to [defraud not thy brother](#).

MY ANSWER:

Mr. Stewart says about the minister of the church of Christ: He says, “More Heresy!” I agree, but on whose side? He says, “Over and over we are warned in the Bible to be careful how we live as believers because we each shall give account to God. We are commanded to [defraud not thy brother](#).”

Question: Sometimes I do not understand what Mr. Stewart really wants to say. First he said that “you CANNOT lose your salvation” (see p. 81), and now he is saying that “Over and over we are warned in the Bible to be careful how we live as believers because we each shall give account to God.” And, that “We are commanded to [defraud not thy brother](#).”

Mr. Stewart, why we are **warned over and over** in the Bible? For what we are warned in the Bible? If according to your false teaching, those who believe like you do are “*once saved always saved*”, they are promised “eternal security”? For what they **need to give account**, they are always saved, they have no problem, *even if they commit murder*, according to you, they will be in heaven! And if they *defraud their brother*, what will happen to them, will they still be saved, *even if they do not repent*? Or they have to give account to God for *disobeying*. You see how you contradict yourself! So now, we have in Heaven people you are murderers and others who have defrauded their brother/s!

1 Thessalonians 4:6 – “⁶*That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.*”

We read this: “...*because that the Lord is the avenger of all such...*” and the Greek word which is translated as “avenger” is the word “*ekdikos*” and literally means “carrying justice out, i.e. *a punisher*.” Now, one has to wonder why Paul put these two words together, the taking advantage of and the carrying out of justice or to punish those who do you wrong. The only thing that comes to mind is that Paul is trying to tell us that if someone does something wrong against us, we are not to get even by taking advantage of them. In the Word of God we are taught that we are to forgive everyone their transgresses against us, especially our fellow believers in Christ.

“We *are commanded...*” Who are the “*we*”? Paul is giving a command to Christians. And if someone like Mr. Stewart comes to us and tell us there is no need to obey that command, the same as he says about the *command* to be baptized, what will happen? But now Mr. Stewart knows that we have to obey that command. And if we do not obey, what will happen? If we do not obey, “*the Lord is the avenger of all such*” He will punish not reward those who do such!

The word “*defraud*”, here, has some commentators on the Bible puzzled into thinking that Paul has changed his subject from the previous verses on sexuality, and is now talking about how Christians should conduct themselves in their business dealings with one another. But this is hardly possible in light of the fact that he returns to the same subject of sexuality in **verse 7**. No, this defrauding; this depriving and cheating of a brother are indeed, in relation to the way that we use our sexuality. Since there is no obvious explanation of this in the text itself, we must try to think of what the Apostle intends, by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Where is the word “defraud” used in other places in the Scripture? Well turn with me to **1 Corinthians 7** and I think that we will be able to understand what the inspired apostle Paul is driving at here in **1 Thessalonians**. Paul says here in **1 Corinthians 7:1-6** “¹*Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*” (This means to touch a woman sexually.) ²*Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.*” ³*Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.*” ⁴*The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.*” “*And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*” ⁵*Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*” ⁶*But I say this as a concession,*

not as a commandment.” Now as we look at this passage and compare it to the other in **1 Thessalonians** we find that the subject of sexual immorality is the subject being addressed in both. And here in this passage we find that it is wrong within marriage for either the husband or the wife to *deprive* or *defraud* one another of the affection that each is to render to the other. The word *deprived*, or *defraud*, is being used in a similar way in both of these passages even though there are different Greek words which are being used in each passage. The word for *defraud* in the Greek in the passage in **1 Thessalonians** is *Pleonekteo* and it means to overreach or to get an advantage, or to *defraud*. The word *defraud* in the Greek in the passage in **1 Corinthians** is *Apostereo*, a word derived from *stereo* which means to despoil, *to defraud*, or to keep back by fraud. So, in the passage that we are studying in **1 Thessalonians**, the word is used in the sense of going too far, and doing what is unlawful. In the Corinthians passage it is speaking of withholding or depriving the other person in marriage of what lawfully belongs to them; that is, sexual affection, help, and care.

Now – We will ask the question, “What does it mean that *the Lord is the Avenger of all such who defraud their brother?*”

Verse 6 says, “...*that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.*” “*For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.*” Remember that *Paul is addressing the believers* at Thessalonica. And when a preacher or a teacher is addressing the brethren, he must be faithful to warn them, as the Apostle Paul did, against tolerating any known sin in their heart or life. He does this so that they will not deceive themselves. Paul forewarned those *who were Christians*, realizing the self-deceptive nature of sin. “*He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes his sins, this man shall find mercy.*” To transgress and to cover that transgression is to “*go beyond*” the Biblical boundaries and to *defraud* your brother. God will avenge this, *unless the sin is forsaken; unless it is left behind and not attended to.*

You see, Mr. Stewart, that even you accept that a Christian can sin by defrauding his brother, and the Lord who is the Avenger of such, will condemn him, **IF** he does not repent.

Mr. David J. Stewart says,

“There will be tears in heaven for those believers who lived for SELF and hurt other people while upon the earth.

The blood of our loved ones will be upon our hands if we have failed to witness to them. We can't force them to accept the truth, but we CAN love them and tell them the good news of Jesus Christ. There will be tears throughout the Millennium, but all tears shall be wiped away at the end, after the Great White Throne of Judgment. All

former things will be passed away (Revelation 21:4). Being a Christian DOESN'T give us a license to sin. Though our sins are under the blood and all is well between us and God as far as our sin debt, we must still make things right with those we have wronged. Salvation balances the scale of justice between us and God, but the scales of justice must also be balanced between us and those we have victimized or hurt in any way (Romans 12:19). The Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a JUDGMENT only for believers, it is not going to be a joyous time for most believers. There WILL be many tears."

MY ANSWER:

Yes, I am sure that there will be tears, but at the judgment day because there will be many surprises (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

There would be no need to wipe the tears away if there were none remaining.

Isaiah 25:8 – *“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.”*

Revelation 21:4 – *“And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.”*

The words “tears” and “heaven” certainly don’t seem to belong together. Like war and peace, light and darkness, health and sickness, these simply don’t seem to coexist. What would cause tears in heaven? When we reflect on how we lived for Christ, Who has purchased us at such a high cost, there will be tears on the other side of the celestial gates. There will be tears of regret and shame, tears of remorse for lives lived for ourselves rather than for Jesus Christ Who “loves us, and gave Himself for us.” But then, after these tears are shed, God will graciously wipe them away, and there will never be sorrow or crying anymore.

Mr. Stewart says that “there will be tears in heaven for those believers who lived for SELF and hurt other people while upon the earth” but he does not quote from the Bible the book, chapter and verse where the Bible says so! His imagination is not a part of God’s Word! So now, in Heaven we will have murderers, those who defraud their brothers and believers who lived for SELF and ***hurt other people*** while upon the earth. Then, I ask, who is going to be in Hell? Those who believe and teach baptism for the remission of sins as a command of the Lord?

But what about those “who live for self and hurt others while upon the earth”? Let God’s Word give him the answer:

2 Corinthians 5:10 – *“¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”*

Question: Is hurting others good or evil?

Exodus 20:14-16 – “¹⁴*You shall not commit adultery.* ¹⁵*You shall not steal.* ¹⁶*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.”*

Does these action hurt others? Will those who commit adultery, steal, witness against their neighbour be found in heaven? According to Mr, Stewart, yes they will.

The Bible tells us not to hurt others, even when they have hurt us first.

Romans 12:17 – “¹⁷*Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all.”*

What happens to those who repay evil for evil? Will they be in heaven, too? According to Mr, Stewart, yes they will. I am talking about those who are believers and who are not unbelievers.

Romans 12:14 – “¹⁴*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”*

What happens to those who curse? Will they be in Heaven? According to Mr, Stewart, yes they will.

Romans 12:19 – “¹⁹*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”*

God will repay those who hurt others not reward them!

Ephesians 4:31-32 – “*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*

What will happen to those who do not obey this command to “***Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice***”? Will the be in Heaven? According to Mr, Stewart, yes they will.

Colossians 3:13 – “¹³*bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.”*

What will happen to those who will not forgive? Will they be in Heaven? According to Mr, Stewart, yes they will.

Matthew 5:20-22 – “²⁰*For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* ²¹*You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'* ²²*But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.* ²³*So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has*

something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

What will happen, to those who murder? Will they be in Heaven? According to Mr, Stewart, yes they will. That is what he says in his article.

What will happen to those who hurt others by INSULTING them by calling them: wolves in sheep clothing, stupid! Idiots, foolish! Liars, woefully ignorant? Will they be in Heaven? According to Mr, Stewart, yes they will. He will be one of them because all those insult were thrown by him to the *wayward* minister of the church of Christ.

But what our Lord says about such people: Were they will find themselves? Listen to the Lord’s words: “***whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire***” Now let Mr. Stewart tell you himself what he thinks that this means! “**WILL BE LIABLE TO THE HELL OF FIRE.**”

Mr. Stewart, how many times you called the minister of the church of Christ (and myself) “FOOLISH”? Remember that THE HELL OF FIRE that our Lord is talking about is NOT HEAVEN!

Then what about those who hurt our Lord by calling a command of His: **BAPTISM (uh oh! This is damnable heresy!)**? Will they be in Heaven or in Hell?

John 12:48 – “*The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*”

Matthew 28:20 – “*Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*”

Mr. Stewart, are you teaching your hearers *to observe all that Jesus has commanded you*? Surely not! You are calling one of Jesus’ commands a **damnable heresy!**

Again, Mr. Stewart, please read **Acts 8:22-23** and humble yourself and ask for forgiveness, first from the Lord and then from the minister of the church of Christ!

Mr. David J. Stewart says,

Heaven is Not a Physical Place?

I was really surprised when the Church of Christ minister told me that he didn't believe in heaven as a place. He believed that heaven was only a spiritual existence, NOT a literal place. I asked him about the streets of gold and the gates of pearl, he didn't believe they were literal. I asked him about the mansions which Jesus spoke of in John 14:1-2, he denied those also as being physical homes. I don't know what he's been smoking, but he sure needs to get with the program. He has been blinded by a false religion, sad but true.

MY ANSWER:

Mr. Stewart has a habit of choosing were he want to take things which clearly are not literal at face value and things which are clearly literal not at face value, as I have shown many times before. Streets of gold and the gates of pearl he believes that they are literal and not symbolic. Either he took this idea from the Muslims or from the Mormons. I will explain later on.

Is heaven real? If so, how does one know? In spite of bogus claims of having visited heaven, such as that professed by Ellen G. White of Seventh-day Adventist fame (1945, 32ff), no one has died, gone to heaven, and returned to earth to tell of the experience (cf. **2 Corinthians 12:1-10**). All we really know about heaven is what is revealed in Scripture. In thinking of the celestial realm, one might approach the subject from three perspectives: logical, historical, and biblical.

Biblical Testimony

The clearest, most certain argument for the reality of heaven is the testimony of sacred Scripture.

Since “*life and immortality*” have been “*brought to light*” through the “*gospel*” (**2 Timothy 1:10**), it is to be expected that the New Testament will contain more information on heaven than does the Old Testament. Nonetheless, there are clear allusions to the eternal reward of the faithful in the earlier revelation as well.

Abraham certainly had some concept of heaven, for Scripture notes that “*he looked for the city that has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*” The patriarchs died “*in faith*” and confessed that they were but pilgrims on earth. They desired a “*better country,*” and that place God had “*prepared for them*” (**Hebrews 11:9-16**).

Moses forsook Egypt and chose ill-treatment with God’s people, accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, looking toward to “*the recompense of reward*” (**Hebrews 11:24ff**). David believed he ultimately would be with his deceased baby in a better place (**2 Samuel 12:23**).

It goes without saying that our Lord Jesus Christ spoke frequently of heaven. He promised that those enduring persecution would have reward in heaven (**Matthew 5:10-12**). He encourages us to lay up treasures in heaven that will abide (**Matthew 6:19-21**). In leaving earth’s environment, he promised to prepare a place where the faithful might ultimately be with him (**John 14:2-3**). The New Testament documents are punctuated repeatedly with promises of heaven for those devoted to Christ (cf. **Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Peter 1:3-5**).

The Nature of Heaven

It is a most unfortunate circumstance that the biblical representation of heaven *has been so skewed by misguided teachers (like Mr. Stewart) whose mode of thinking is so earth-bound that heaven cannot be perceived except in terms of a material or physical environment.*

From the very nature of the case, some symbolism is required to represent the non-material, spirit realm. There is a vast difference, however, between recognizing the use of symbols (such as those common to the book of Revelation) and materializing heaven itself. Let us consider several examples of how man has perverted the nature of heaven by fashioning his own concept of the final abode of the saints.

The Islamic Heaven

Mohammed's idea of a "bedroom" heaven was crude beyond adequate expression. Noted historian Phillip Schaff described it as "a sensual paradise, with blooming gardens, fresh fountains, and an abundance of beautiful virgins" (1894, 1543).

McClintock and Strong depicted Islam's paradise as follows:

As to the various felicities which await the pious (and of which there are about a hundred degrees), they are a wild conglomeration of Jewish, Christian, Magian, and other fancies on the subject, to which the Prophet's own exceedingly sensual imagination has added very considerably. Feasting in the most gorgeous and delicious variety, the most costly and brilliant garments, odours and music of the most ravishing nature, and above all, the enjoyment of the Hur Al-Oyun, the black-eyed daughters of paradise, created of pure musk, and free from all the bodily weaknesses of the female sex, are held out as a reward to the commonest inhabitants of paradise, who will always remain in the full vigour of their youth and manhood (1969, 414).

A separate place is reserved for women since "they are not of a prominently spiritual nature," and likely could not enjoy the male environment! The majority of inhabitants of hell are said to be women.

The more liberal wing of Islam attempts to smooth over the sensual and harsh nature of the "Prophet's" teachings (Ali 1946, 1464-70), but history is what it is!

Mormonism's Heaven

The "heaven" of Joseph Smith Jr. bears no resemblance to the biblical domain of righteous bliss. In a "vision" allegedly received February 16, 1832, Joseph Smith claimed there are three levels of heavenly "glory": the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestia—supposedly corresponding to the sun, moon, and stars (**1 Corinthians 15:41**). Smith, who was significantly influenced by the dogma of Universalism (cf. Tanner 1987, 196ff),

contended that most all of the human family eventually would inhabit one or the other of these spheres (Smith 1952, 76).

Celestial — This realm is blessed by the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is reserved for the faithful who accept the fullness of the gospel, together with those who would have done so had opportunity presented itself to them, as well as unaccountable children, and those who have entered the covenant of “celestial” marriage. Eventually all of these can evolve to the status of “gods.”

Terrestrial — This state is inhabited by people who reject the gospel, but nonetheless are moral. It also is the abode of those who accept the gospel but do not remain faithful to the Lord. It houses as well those on whose behalf others obey the “post-mortem” plan of salvation (“baptism for the dead”). Finally, it includes the heathen who never was exposed to the truth. This sphere is blessed only by the Son and Holy Spirit.

Telestial — There is no such word as “telestial.” It is a term coined by Smith to depict the state of those who “received not the gospel,” and—along with liars, murderers, adulterers, and whoremongers—are thrust into the “eternal fire” of hell, but who are to be rescued from torment when Christ has finished his work (a clear contradiction). Only the Holy Spirit visits this place.

Ultimately, then, there is almost no one left for true everlasting punishment in hell—only Satan, his angels, and those who knew the full gospel but committed the unpardonable sin (yet see **Matthew 25:46**). It is not difficult to discern that Mormonism rivals Catholicism’s idea of Purgatory. In fact, Joseph Smith came to believe there is no eternal punishment for any man (19.6).

The “Watchtower” Heaven

The Jehovah Witnesses have almost no concept of the distinction between literal and figurative language in the Bible. Accordingly, they extract two texts from highly symbolic portions of the book of Revelation (**7:1ff**; **14:1ff**) and conclude that “the final number of the heavenly church will be 144,000, according to God’s decree” (*Let God Be True* 1946, 113). The balance of humanity, they contend, will live on God’s glorified earth.

The “Heaven-on-Earth” Theory

The notion that this earth will be purged by fire at the end of time and restored to a material paradise is extremely popular in the denominational community. As Presbyterian scholar Charles Hodge declared: “Earth shall become heaven” (1860, 141).

Some of the restoration pioneers advocated a similar view, amidst other eschatological (end-of-time) confusion (e.g., millennialism), and there

seems to be at least a minor escalation of this theory today among some younger preachers. There are serious fallacies associated with this concept:

(1) Repeatedly, the Bible makes a clear distinction between the heaven that is reserved for the saved, and the earth (see **Matthew 5:34-35; 6:10, 19-20**).

(2) The proof texts upon which the “heaven-on-earth” idea are based are: **Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1**. The fact is, each of these passages *in context* clearly demonstrates **figurative** language. In the Isaiah texts, the “new heavens” and “new earth” are symbols prefiguring the **Christian dispensation** (cf. **65:17** with **2:2-4; 11:6-9** and **66:22** with **2:2-4** and **66:20b**).

In **2 Peter 3:13** the “new earth” cannot be the present globe, for the same context indicates that at the Lord’s return the earth shall be “*burned up*” or “*dissolved*” (vv. **10-11**).

Nor can **Revelation 21:1** refer to the material earth, for that will have “*passed away*” and be “*no more*.”

(3) There is a principle in logic which states that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. If $2+2=4$, and $3+1=4$, then $2+2$ and $3+1$ are math equivalents.

If it is the case that the faithful are promised a place that is called “*heaven*,” which is distinguished from “*earth*,” and likewise there is an eternal realm designated as the “*new heavens and new earth*,” then it follows that the “*new heavens and new earth*” are the equivalent of **heaven**. The former is a figurative expression for the latter. Just as the “*new heavens and new earth*” of Isaiah’s prophecies foretold of a **new spiritual environment**, the church, even so, the “*new heavens and new earth*” of both Peter and John speak of a **new spiritual realm**—heaven.

(4) Frequently it is claimed that **Romans 8:20-22** teaches a restored earth in the final order of things. This is an unfounded conclusion. The material creation in this context has been **personified** so as to express the keen anticipation of the consummation of earth’s affairs when its purpose has been realized.

This type of argument certainly is not without precedent in the Scriptures. In **Psalm 114**, the inspired writer describes the deliverance of God’s people from Egyptian bondage. In conjunction with that glorious event, various elements of the creation are depicted as cooperating with, and rejoicing at, Israel’s freedom. The sea saw it and fled, the mountains skipped as rams, the hills frolicked like little lambs, and the earth trembled.

The Old Testament is replete with this type of symbolism (cf. **Psalm 96:12; 98:8; Isaiah 35:1; 55:12**).

(5) Do the final two chapters of the book of Revelation represent a renovated **material** earth for people with **physical** bodies? Are there mountains, rivers, and animals, as some allege? Is Jerusalem a literal city with foundations, gates, jewels, etc.?

If one views the items mentioned in **Revelation 21** in a **material** or **physical** sense, numerous problems arise. For example, if the language is literal, how can “*Jerusalem*” be both a “*city*” and a “*bride*”? If literalism prevails, why is Jerusalem a “*city*” in one verse, yet the “*tabernacle*” in another (**vv. 2-3**)? Are not these figures of speech that represent the “*peoples*” of God (**v. 3b**)? How many other things in the Apocalypse must be literalized, e.g., incense, instruments of music, horses, a serpent, dragons, and harlots? (For more on this, see below.)

Here is another interesting question: if the “new earth” is to be both material and physical, as Mr. Stewart and others contend, what will happen on the last day of earth’s history?

Since all dead bodies that come forth from the grave *will be spiritual*, and not physical (**1 Corinthians 15:44**), won’t the Lord, following the renovation of the earth, have to reconstitute the spiritual body, making it conform once more to the physical or material earth?

The Origin of the Theory

The fact is, this idea of “transforming” the earth had its origin in the pseudepigrapha literature of the inter-biblical period, and not in Scripture.

For instance, in the book of **1 Enoch**, there is this statement: “I will transform the heaven and make it an eternal blessing; and I will transform the earth and make it a blessing” (**45:4**).

There are numerous other references of similar import. J. W. Roberts wrote:

Some apocalyptic writers had thought that the present earth would merely be transformed (**Jubilees 1:29; Enoch 45:1**), though others predicted that “the first heaven will pass away, a new heaven will appear” (**Enoch 91:16**). This [latter view] accords with the New Testament expectation (**Matthew 5:18; 2 Peter 3:12; Hebrews 12:27**), though John does not describe the process of destruction. He has said, “...*earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them*” (**20:11**) (1974, 179).

Professor Frank Pack observed:

This new heaven and new earth is that which is spoken of by our Lord. It would appear that this is best understood as the vision of **heaven itself**, thought of in terms of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city in the new heaven and the new earth (1984, 93; emphasis added).

It is a most unfortunate thing that the true Bible teaching on heaven has been so misunderstood and misdirected—by well-meaning souls in some

cases, *by carnal and unscrupulous manipulators in other instances*. Many are so earth-oriented in their perspective that they cannot possibly envision how they might be happy eternally in a purely spiritual realm. Hence, just as some have fashioned a “god” in their own image, materialistic people construct their “heaven” of earthly elements. Both are wrong!

Biblical Symbolism of Heaven

The study of heaven has been a much neglected theme. When William Shedd produced his celebrated work, *Dogmatic Theology*, he utilized only two pages on “heaven,” while consuming eighty-seven pages on “hell”! (1971, 664-754). Surely heaven is worthy of greater attention.

Material Symbolism

What is God like as to his essence? Jesus declared that “*God is spirit*” (**John 4:24**), but who knows what spirit is? None of us has ever seen one. We know what spirit is **not**. *It is not flesh, bones, or blood* (**Luke 24:39; Matthew 16:17**), i.e., physical. Do you agree with this, Mr. Stewart?

In view of the inability of the human mind to fathom the “*deep things of God*” (**1 Corinthians 2:10**), the Scriptures accommodate our limitations by the use of figures of speech. One of these is called anthropomorphism (“man form”); this is describing God symbolically in **human** terms, e.g., eyes, ears, arms, hands (**Isaiah 53:1; 59:1; Hebrews 4:13**). It is a serious error to think of God the Father literally as a **physical** being, as our Mormon friends do (**Smith, 130:22**).

Similarly, heaven is a spiritual realm. The Bible, therefore, employs a variety of figures of speech to represent the grandeur of heaven, and it is a mistake to literalize these symbols. *Yet such is common among well-meaning, though misguided, students*.

Figures for Heaven

The Hebrew term *samayim* (heaven/s) is found 421 times in the Old Testament, and its corresponding Greek companion, *ouranos*, is employed 273 times in the New Testament. Both expressions are used in several different senses, in each case being defined by the context.

“Heaven” may refer to the realm of the birds (**Genesis 1:26; Matthew 8:20**) or the region of weather phenomena (**Genesis 8:2; James 5:18**). The term also can embrace what we call “outer space,” the arena of the planets and stars (**Genesis 1:14; 22:17**).

Then there is the place where the abode of God is focused—called “*heaven*” (**Matthew 6:9**), the “*heaven of heavens*” (**Deuteronomy 10:14**), or “*the third heaven*” (**2 Corinthians 12:2**).

There are many figures of speech that represent the heavenly sphere. Heaven is represented as a “*city*” (**Hebrews 11:10**) or a “*country*” (**vv. 14-16**). Jesus characterized it as both a “*house*” and a “*place*” (**John 14: 2**). It

may be depicted as a “*temple*” (**Isaiah 6:1**) or a “*throne*” (**Matthew 5:34**). It is called “*glory*” (**1 Timothy 3:16**) and a “*kingdom*” (**2 Timothy 4:18**). It is the ultimate “*holy city, the new Jerusalem*” (**Revelation 21:2**) and the garden-like Paradise of God (**Revelation 2:7**). It will be our eternal “*home*” (**2 Corinthians 5:8**).

The New Jerusalem

In **Revelation 21:1-22:5** there is a marvellous depiction of the celestial home of God’s people. *Symbolically* it is represented as “*a new heaven and a new earth,*” “*the holy city, new Jerusalem.*” It is pictured as “*coming down out of heaven*” (**21:2**). The “*coming down*” is not to be viewed as a “*spatial*” movement (Jones 1971, 116), as evidenced by the subsequent repetition of the phrase (**v. 10**). There is the suggestion of something which partakes of the “*heavenly*” nature.

This section of Revelation falls into four principal segments: (a) its inhabitants, the redeemed (**21:1-8**); (b) its symbolic structure, in grandeur and scope (**vv. 9-21**); its glory, safety, and sanctification (**vv. 22-27**); (d) the river of life (**22:1-5**). Let us consider these segments.

(Rev. 21:1-8) – There is a merging of several figures of speech as the image of the holy city itself gives place to its inhabitants, the victorious people of God—under the picture of a bride who has been made ready for her husband. The picture of the tabernacle appears, i.e., the dwelling place of God. He is personally with his people and they belong to him. All of their sorrows and pains are vanquished. Trials give way to “*all things new.*”

The eternal God provides the “*water of life*” that will perpetually quench the thirst of the Lord’s people. The reward has not been merited, but is freely given; yet, the gift has been bestowed only to those who, *by obedient faith*, have “*overcome*” (**cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21**). This place and people stand in stark contrast to the vile inmates of hell.

(Rev. 21:9-21) – There is now a symbolic depiction of the city. It is heavenly in nature, blessed with the glory of God himself. The city is surrounded by a wall, great and high—reflecting the concept of absolute security. The gates are ever open (**v. 25**); there is no threat from without; heaven’s enemies have been dealt with already (**v. 8**).

On the gates are written the names of the tribes of Israel and the wall is undergirded by twelve foundations upon which are the names of the twelve apostles. The number twelve likely is a figure for the full complement of the redeemed—from both Old and New Testament eras. The symbolism is clear inasmuch as there were **thirteen** devout apostles. Literalizing the context is inexcusable.

The heavenly “*Jerusalem*” is represented as vast in area (1,500 miles in each direction—width, breadth, and height). It is perfectly clear that this is not a literally restored earthly Jerusalem. Coffman has shown that if one allows 1/10th of a mile to the level for the height, that would be 15,000 levels, allowing a floor space of more than thirty-three billion square miles, “many times the total area” of our planet (1979, 484). This is another indication that heaven is not a renovated “earth.”

The cubed shape of the city is reminiscent of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, which was the dwelling place of God (**Exodus 25:22; 1 Kings 6:20**). The unparalleled beauty and value of the city are portrayed by pure gold and brilliant gems. To illustrate, the “*building of the wall was like jasper,*” even as “*pure glass*” (v. 18). The original term (iaspis) designates any opaque stone; it possibly refers to the diamond (Danker et al. 2000, 465). The term “*building*” (endomesis—used only here in the New Testament) can denote that which is built-in, or as we might describe it, inlaid. Here it may suggest a diamond-studded wall. As one writer noted, the “language breaks down in endeavouring to describe the radiance, the glory, the wealth, the beauty, and the magnificence of this great city” (Pack, 90).

(**Rev. 21:22-27**) – Both the Father and the Son become the divine sanctuary in this segment. Jesus also is represented as “*the Lamb,*” referring, of course to his sacrifice for sin (**John 1:29**). The inseparable connection between the Father and the Lamb is clear testimony of the *deity of the Son*. Such is a strong indictment of cultists like the “Watchtower” devotees, who claim that Christ was “nothing more than a perfect man” (*Let God Be True* 1946, 87).

In this wondrous realm there is no “*night,*” hence no need for artificial illumination—or even the sun—for the splendour of heaven is that of the glory of God and the Lamb (**cf. 22:5**). This is another clue that this is not a renewed **material** universe. Mention of the “*nations*” (**vv. 24, 26**) reveals that the population is international in composition (**cf. 7:9**).

The sustained purity of heaven is emphasized by the fact that nothing unclean will ever enter the sacred domain (**cf. 22:15**). Those who glory in their carnality should take careful note. Furthermore, heaven is reserved only for those whose names are written (perfect tense, “permanently written,” [v. 27b]) in the Lamb’s book of life. These are they who, by obedience to Christ, entered his spiritual body (**1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27**), the church (**Colossians 1:18, 24**), hence have been “enrolled” in heaven (**Hebrews 12:23**).

(**Rev. 22:1-5**) – There is a connection between the books of Genesis and Revelation. Things that went wrong at the commencement of human history, as revealed in Genesis, are shown now to be rectified in the eternal

order of heavenly things. God's great plan has never failed in spite of the multitudes that are lost (**Matthew 7:13-14; 22:14**).

This section on heaven concludes with a discussion of the "river" of the "water of life," i.e., in the imagery, it is that which sustains life eternal (cf. John 4:13-14). The water issues from God's throne, a suggestion of divine authority. It is not that which man could initiate for himself.

All needs of the saints are provided—water to quench thirst, food from the tree of life to sustain, and perpetual health from the leaves of the tree of life. We must ever remind ourselves that these are spiritual symbols, for there is neither sickness nor death in heaven. Note that the "nations" stand healed. The nations that once made war with the Lamb have been conquered by his love (Roberts, 193).

The curse imposed in Eden has been removed forever. Those who have the Lamb's "name" on their forehead—a symbol of identification, perhaps suggesting also their mental assent to his teaching—bask in the radiance of his face and rejoice in serving him evermore.

The **materialistic** approach of many with regard to heaven—with its supposed literal buildings, streets, physical bodies, marriages, animals, etc.—that has consumed the sectarian community and is making in-roads in the church, is disturbing. It cannot but make one wonder how some people could ever expect to enjoy heaven once they are confronted with the reality that there will be no shopping malls, golf courses, fishing streams, or hunting seasons. No Monday Night Football or the legion of other material pursuits that utterly consume the attention of far too many professing disciples of the Lord. When baseball is thrilling, yet Bible study, prayer, and worship services are dull, the biblical heaven is light-years from the heart.

Some Facts about Heaven

But what will heaven be like from a **personal** point of view? What are some of the qualities that will reward the believer who remains faithful, perhaps even in the face of pain and death? (**Revelation 2:10**). What makes our ultimate "home" so precious?

Blissful Rest

John wrote: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth, yes says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them" (**Revelation 14:13**). Note the following: "Blessed" (makarios) is a New Testament term that always describes people. It carries the idea of happiness, a state of bliss (cf. **Matthew 5:3ff; John 13:17**). It is the hope of every child of God (**Titus 2:13**).

This bliss is a present reality that extends into eternity. It is promised to those who die "in the Lord." One cannot die in the Lord who has lived **out**

of the Lord. The happiness is accompanied by “rest” from “labour,” a term that signifies work to the point of exhaustion—a condition that scarcely describes some members of the church. The rest is entered only by diligence (**Hebrews 4:11**).

The Reward of Reaping

The agricultural motif of sowing and reaping abounds in Scripture. Several principles of this symbol are: One reaps only the kind he has sown, whether for good or bad (**Galatians 6:7-8**). The harvest is more abundant than the **quantity** of the seed sown. The sower must be **patient**, for he will reap in due season if he does not faint—a warning about possible apostasy (**v. 9**).

Elsewhere the Lord provided other glimpses. In one of his parables he has a father say to his boy, “Son, go work today in the vineyard” (**Matthew 21:28**). There is an **object** of the command—the son; an **obligation**—work; the **urgency**—today; and the **designated place**—in the vineyard. There will be a glorious reward in heaven, but such will be realized only by obedient service.

A Realm of Righteousness

Heaven will be thrilling indeed because of the absolute goodness that characterizes it continuously. It will be inhabited by the Holy Godhead (**Revelation 4:8**), holy angels (**Luke 9:26**), and the “just” (i.e., justified) ones who have been made perfect (**Hebrews 12:23**).

There will be no police or prisons, and no “most-wanted.” The pristine environment will be bereft of pimps, prostitutes, and porn-shops. There will be no sniffers, puffers, or drug-shooters who are “high” on “substance.” Heaven will be void of all those renegades who have entered the bowels of everlasting hell (**Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Revelation 14:9-12; 21:8; 22:15**).

A Region of Responsibility

Some may be alarmed to learn that heaven will not be a place of mere recreation and retirement, though an atmosphere of constant supreme joy will prevail. One writer, who has depicted heaven as a material kingdom on earth, crudely literalizes by describing it as a place of “partying,” with amazing food and fine wine, along with music and dancing. (Lebhar 2006, 297). But the paradise of God will be a place of **responsible service**.

John declares that in heaven God’s “*servants shall serve him*” (**Revelation 22:3b**) and such will be continuous (**cf. 7:15**). From our presently jaded vantage point, it is difficult to imagine that the thrill of serving God will be so consuming one will never grow weary of it. How this challenges our dull minds!

In one of his parables, Jesus told of ten servants who were entrusted by their master with money to invest in trading. When they were finally called to account, each was rewarded with responsibility in **direct proportion** to the manner in which he had utilized his preparatory ability (**Luke 19:16-19**). This seems to clearly indicate varying levels of responsibility in the heavenly administrations (**cf. 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 3:21; 22:5**).

Reunion and Recognition

When faithful Abraham died, he “was gathered to his people” (**Genesis 25:8**). This cannot refer to the interment of his body, for his people were buried in Mesopotamia; but he was interred in Canaan. The phrase must allude to a **reunion** with faithful ancestral patriarchs. Both Jacob and David expected to be reunited with loved ones. The former anticipated going “to [his] son,” Joseph, whom he perceived to be dead at this time (**Genesis 37:35**). Clearly David expected to see his sweet child in the afterlife (**2 Samuel 12:23**).

Jesus told of many who “*shall come from the east and the west [an allusion to the Gentiles], and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*” (**Matthew 8:11**). As noted earlier, heaven will embrace an international conglomerate of saints. Such a promise implies an **awareness** of fulfilment when finally realized. Will we know Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Certainly. Will Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob **know Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?** There is clear recognition of kinsmen here.

The problem is frequently posed: “If I will know my loved ones who **are** in heaven, I certainly will know that some of them **are not** there! In that event, how could I possibly be happy?” Three things may be said about that. First, God will “fix” all potential problems; this is expressed in the promise that the Lord “*will wipe away every tear from their eyes*” (**Revelation 7:17; cf. 21:4**). Second, with a tremendously heightened sense of spirituality, we will not view loved ones who died in rebellion to God with the same jaundiced vision we now have. Third, if the Lord himself can be happy (see “blessed” makarios, “happy” – **1 Timothy 1: 11; 6:15**), with his **greater** love for humanity than any of us has, we should be confident that the joy of heaven will eclipse any and all sadness of this life’s remembrances.

The Reliability of Our Hope

Since the Bible occasionally speaks of the prospect of heaven as a “hope,” some are inclined to assign a rather weak meaning to “hope,”—as, for example, “I hope to strike it rich some day.” That is not the significance of biblical hope. Genuine hope includes both a “desire” for something and a “confident expectation,” or “solid assurance,” of the goal to be attained (Mounce 2006, 340).

In Paul's magnificent defence of the gospel before the Roman governor Felix, he argued his case upon the hope that "*there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust*" (**Acts 24:15; cf. 23:6**). Elsewhere, the apostle contends for the **validity** of the general resurrection on the basis of the historical certainty of Christ's resurrection.

In **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul affirms that Jesus "*was raised on the third day according to the scriptures*" (**v. 3**). He introduces a string of witnesses to the risen Lord, not the least of which was a company of some five hundred people on one occasion, of whom most were still alive for examination (**v. 6**). He stakes the entire credibility of the Christian message upon Jesus' resurrection; upon that foundation our faith and hope are based (**vv. 16-19**). Thus, our hope of eternal life (i.e., heaven) is grounded in **that** resurrection. Is, then, the resurrection narrative credible?

Greenleaf also produced a profound volume titled, *The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*. Therein he forcefully demonstrated that the Gospel records pass the test of historical-legal credibility with flying colours. Christ was raised; there will be a general resurrection, and the righteous will enter heaven (**John 5:28-29**).

Mr. David J. Stewart says,

In conclusion, I firmly DOUBT anyone's salvation who ADDS baptism to a childlike faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! I also sincerely doubt the salvation of any person who feels they have to live a certain way to keep their salvation (which is a big lie). The entire MINDSET is very different when you believe you are not eternally secure.

Just as the Muslims have no assurance of salvation, neither does the Church of Christ. I KNOW I am saved and NOTHING can take that from me. I CANNOT lose my salvation. So do I have a license to sin? Of course not! I don't want to sin because I still have to give account to God someday and I already have enough to answer for. I love God and want to please Him, but I fear Him equally so. I became a new creature when I was born-again. I don't live right to get saved, I live right because I am saved and God's Holy Spirit lives in my heart. My Bible says that I am saved and sure!

MY ANSWER:

Mr. Stewart once more is caught in Satan's snare by saying:

1. "I firmly DOUBT anyone's salvation who ADDS baptism to a childlike faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Once more, Mr. Stewart, **WHO COMANDED BAPTISM? WHO ADDED BAPTISM TO BELIEF in Mark 16:16? WHO COMMANDED BAPTISM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT? WHO**, Mr.

Stewart? All I want is the name of WHO GAVE THE COMMAND TO BE BAPTIZED? Show us how honest you are now!

2. “I also sincerely doubt the salvation of any person who feels they have to live a certain way to keep their salvation (which is a big lie). The entire MINDSET is very different when you believe you are not eternally secure.”

God will give you the answer, Mr. Stewart.

Colossians 2:6-7 – explains this: “*So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, **continue to live in him**, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness.*”

Hebrews 3:14 – “¹⁴*For we have come to share in Christ, **if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.***”

John 15:1, 2, 6 – “¹*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser. ²**Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit....**⁶**If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.***”

Mr. Stewart, what you doubt is of no importance the same as what I doubt. If it is for you *a big lie, for a person to live a certain ways of life to be saved*, then you are saying the same big lie that Satan said at the beginning to Eve. (**Genesis 3:1**) Satan asked a question that caused Eve to doubt the words she had heard from God. And this is exactly what is being done by those who are teaching the false theory of eternal security that you are teaching.

Mr. Stewart, does not the words “***continue to live in him***” show that a Christian person to continue to live a certain way of life in Jesus and that there is the danger of ***not*** continuing living in Him?

Mr. Stewart, what does it mean to you “***if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end***”? And if we do not “***hold our original confidence firm to the end***” what will happen? Does not “if indeed we hold...” show that there is the danger that we will not hold?

Mr. Stewart, do you believe what Jesus really says, that is, that “***A branch in Him***” can ***thrown away like a branch and withers...and burned***”. Do you still doubt, Mr. Stewart? Does not this show that we have to continue to live a certain way of life to be saved, or else, we will be thrown away like a branch and withers and burned?

1 Timothy 4:1 – “¹Now *the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.*”

But Mr. Stewart says that this is a lie. He makes the Holy Spirit a liar!

1 Timothy 5:12 – “¹¹*But refuse to enrol younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry*¹²*and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.*”

Matthew 5:13 – “¹³*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.*”

Hebrews 10:38 – “³⁸*but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.*”

Mr. Stewart, please explain to me the meaning of “*some will depart from the faith*”; “*draw them away from Christ*”; “*having abandoned their former faith*”; “*but if salt has lost its taste...It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.*” and “*if he shrinks back*”? Do these teach “eternal security”? Please, be honest in your answers.

- 3 . Mr. Stewart says that “The entire MINDSET is very different when you believe you are not eternally secure.” Satan said, *You will not surely die (Genesis 3:4)*. This false teaching of Mr. Stewart and others is saying the same lie. “No, you will never be lost, you have eternal security, once saved, always saved.” Many sincere people are accepting this fatal teaching the same as what Adam and Eve did.
- 4 . The, Mr. Stewart, as usual, took the authority which is Christ’s only (**Matthew 28:18**) and continued to condemn others. He said: “Just as the Muslims have no assurance of salvation, neither does the Church of Christ.”

He said that “*neither does the Church of Christ.*” Mr. Stewart our Lord tells us: “*Judge not that ye be not judged.*” (**Matthew 7:1**) Are you not judging millions of souls, Mr. Stewart. Again, our Lord says, “*Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.*” (**John 8:7**). Mr. Stewart, keep your stones to yourself. You said: “I KNOW I am saved and NOTHING can take that from me. I CANNOT lose my salvation.” Maybe that is why you are calling us: *wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, wayward, foolish, liars; etc.* You see, what happens to those who believe in eternal security, they think that they can do and say what they want, even insult other believers like us, and still be saved! As I have said, for them God is at their convenience! How wrong and mistaken you are, Mr. Stewart!

First of all Mr. Stewart has the wrong idea about who is or what is the **church of Christ**. I will ask him a question and again let him show to us his honesty and sincerity by giving us an answer.

In **Matthew 16:18**, Jesus said: “⁸*And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church...*” “**I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH.**” Now, Mr. Stewart, whose church it is that Christ said that He will build? A simple answer I want and not what you think. Just whose church it is? The church of George? The church of Stewart? Or the church of? You answer. I am a member of that church that you will give the answer. I hope that you will have the courage to give the right answer. Was it the Baptist church, or some other denomination that Christ said that He will build? Your answer should be simple, just “The church of” I do not think that one has to go to a Bible college or have a degree in theology to answer that simple question. Some get puzzled when I ask them that simple question and they do not have the courage to give me the right answer. In Maltese we have a saying that says “*il-verità toffendi*”, I will translate it in English: “truth offends.”

5. Mr. Stewart continued to say: “**I KNOW I am saved and NOTHING can take that from me. I CANNOT lose my salvation.**”

The most important thing is what God’s Word says and not what we think we know. I agree that we *can know* that we are saved, (**1 John 3:13; 5:1, 2, 13-16**) but I cannot imagine how one can be saved while throwing all kinds of insults to others who want to serve the Lord, such as, “*wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, and wayward, foolish, liars*” But what does God’s Word say about his. Let us see.

1 John 3:13-15 – “¹³*Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.* ¹⁴*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.* ¹⁵*Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*”

Do you call insulting others by calling them “*wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, and wayward, foolish, liars, stupid*” **love**? What kind of love is that, Mr. Stewart? “*Do not be surprised*” God tells us, and truly what He tells us is happening today. I am not surprised because I have been warned by inspiration. Will these kind of *brothers, called murderers* by the inspired John, be in Heaven, Mr. Stewart? How wrong you are!! (See from page 67). Mr. Stewart, were these brothers saved or not? Maybe you try to continue to deceive your readers by telling them that they were never saved. I will not be surprised, either, if you tell them that!

How can we know that we are saved, Mr. Stewart? God tells us clearly in His Word.

Acts 2:47 – “⁴⁷*praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*”

Question to Mr. Stewart. Who were those **who were being saved** in the context of **Acts 2:36-47**? Were those who after asking “*what shall we do*” they were told by Peter, “**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**”? Mr. Stewart, Were those who were told: “*Save yourselves from this crooked generation.*” ⁴¹*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls*”? Mr. Stewart, were they those who: “*received his word* and who “**repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins**”? But according to your teaching, they were those who **believed only** without **repenting and being baptized for the remission of their sins**. When they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, Mr. Stewart, **before** or **after** they **repented and were baptized for the remission of their sins**? Be honest in your answers, Mr. Stewart, before or **after** **repenting** and being **baptized**? Remember that *honesty is the best policy*.

Mr. David J. Stewart says,

Your not just being safe by adding baptism to faith, your being stupid! I can say this because we are clearly warned throughout the Bible against adding anything to faith. Baptism is useless to get anyone saved. See Romans 11:6, Titus 3:5, and Romans 4:2. The bottom line is that Jesus Christ Himself did not make an issue of baptism! Read through the book of John and you'll discover that Jesus is the door, the way, the truth, the life, the resurrection, the light, the Good Shepherd...but not one mention is made of baptism! Not one!

MY ANSWER:

Again, Mr. Stewart calls us *stupid*. Thank you again, for your compliment. Satan really likes this, Mr. Stewart. Continue in this way and I am sure that Satan will reward you very much.

“If baptism is so important, then why isn’t baptism mentioned in every single passage about conversion?”

You see, Mr. Stewart, what happens when one does not read all his New Testament but only verses that he chooses that he thinks that they teach what he believes? One must keep in mind that we have to agree with what the Bible says and not make the Bible agree with what we say or believe as what Mr. Stewart is doing.

Now let us see how wrong is Mr. Stewart in saying that “If baptism is so important, then why isn’t baptism mentioned in every single passage about conversion?” This is what those whom you call “*wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, and wayward, foolish, liars*” believe, Mr. Stewart. Read carefully maybe you will put aside your mistaken beliefs and obey the Lord so that He can add you to those, who according to you, are: “*wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, wayward, foolish, liars*”! If you really want to learn the truth, Mr. Stewart and all those who agree with you, please continue to read.

There is a simple principle of language that many of us constantly use, **but overlook in scripture**. It is called *synecdoche*. It means: the part represents the whole. We use *synecdoche* all the time in English. The following are examples:

1. “Bless your heart” = We don't mean bless the organ that pumps your blood. We mean “Bless all of you.” The part represents the whole. The heart represents the whole person.
2. “It’s good to see your face” = “It’s good to see YOU, all of you”
3. “Bless the hands that prepared this food” = “Bless ALL of you”
4. “I like your wheels” = “I like your whole car”
5. “Let’s do a head count” = “Let’s count all the people” to include their bodies
6. “I have 100 head of cattle” = “I have 100 whole cows”

We use *synecdoche* all the time. It’s like second nature.

It is also used in the Bible like this. When the New Testament writers speak of being saved by believing, they are using “believe” *synecdochally*. The term “believe” represents the whole response to the gospel. The emphasis he is trying to make in the context decides which term he uses. Sometimes he speaks of being saved by repentance (**2 Pet. 3:9**) but repentance is representative of the WHOLE response to the gospel to include faith, baptism, and being faithful. Baptism is used *synecdochally* in **1 Peter 3:21** and “believe” in places like **Acts 16:31**. But it is apparent that “believe” is used in a representative way in this verse because the jailer was baptized the same hour of the night. Confessing is used in **Romans 10:9-10** along with belief.

It is utterly absurd to expect the New Testament writers to write down every single faith-response to the gospel every time they talk about it. But WHATEVER they wrote, whether believe, repent, baptism, works, confess – ALL were representative of the WHOLE response to the gospel. The hearers understood this.

Baptism is, in fact, mentioned in every single *detailed* conversion story in the book of Acts and not as Mr. Stewart have said.

It must be remembered that *faith, repentance and baptism, all combined*, are what make up the three facets of conversion. Some passages of scripture *emphasize baptism*. Other passages *emphasize belief*, and still others *emphasize repentance*. Some emphasize two out of the three. And yet in still others, all three facets can be seen.

In the book of Acts, when the question was asked, “*What must I do to be saved?*” some were told they needed to *believe* because they had not yet done so. Others were told to *repent* because they had not yet done that. And still others were told to be *baptized* because that still needed to be done. If the New Testament and its teachings are taken as a whole, then it is certainly reasonable to conclude that **God requires faith, repentance, and baptism for a person to be saved**. But those are the requirements by god and not by Mr. Stewart and those who agree with him.

For example, just because one particular passage does not emphasize repentance, it does not mean we do not need to repent. Jesus very clearly stated in **Luke 13:3** that unless we repent, we too, will all perish. Does that mean then that the passages that emphasize *faith*, that *repentance* is not required? Of course not! What about passages that don’t mention *faith, repentance, confessing Christ, or baptism*? Take a look at **Acts 14**. Here, large numbers of people were being converted, yet nothing is mentioned *specifically* as to how people responded, not even *faith*! The fact that they believed must be *inferred*.

Acts 14:21 – “*They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.*”

*Next, we find where people were converted, but it only mentions repentance, **nothing of faith**:*

Acts 26 :20 – “*First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should **repent** and turn to God and prove their **repentance** by their deeds.*”

So we see that some passages speak of *repentance*. Does that mean they didn’t *believe*? Of course not. Other passages speak of *faith* or *belief*. Does that mean they did not *repent*? No. But we know for conversion to occur, even opponents of baptism like Mr. Stewart will grant *at least* faith and repentance is required. This tells us we cannot isolate one single passage from the rest of the other scriptures in trying to derive its meaning. We must look at what the Bible says in all places regarding a particular subject and combine all these passages to see them together as a whole. I hope that Mr. Stewart learns the lesson and will not continue in the path that he is.

Someone will point out that the fact they *repented* implies they also *believed*. This is true. And by the same token, passages that speak only

about *faith* imply, likewise, that they not only *repented*, but they confessed Christ and that they were *baptized* as well.

Again, *every detailed conversion story in the book of Acts mentions baptism* and that it is for the purpose of washing away sin. The vague, passing references to conversion mention only belief specifically, but when the scriptures become more specific and detailed, baptism is always there. Furthermore, “to believe” implies believing the *gospel message*, and the *gospel message* includes not only faith, but repentance and baptism as well. It’s a funny thing, but sometimes *non-Christians understand baptism better than those who profess faith in Christ* (e.g., like Mr. Stewart). Ask a Hindu what baptism means and they will tell you it is something one does when they want to become a Christian.

Jesus said to Peter in **Matthew 16:19**, “*I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven...*” Jesus mentioned *keys* in the plural, not *one* key. So this means there is **more than just one single “key.”** Take the example of a bank vault that has two or more locks on it. One key is given to one officer of the bank, and a second officer holds a second, *different* key. It takes *both* keys to open the vault. Either one by itself will not accomplish the task. It is the *combination* of *both* keys being used *simultaneously* that will successfully open the vault. And so it is with conversion and the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

These keys are: faith, repentance, confessing Christ and baptism. It is when *baptism* is **combined** with *faith* and *repentance*, and **confessing Christ simultaneously** that conversion occurs. Some people are very obstinate and they prefer to continue in the teaching of men rather than to obey God’s Word.

Let’s look at some specific passages and objections that often arise.

Acts 3:19-20 – “*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.*”

Curiously, the phrase, “**and turn to God**” in several versions (KJV, NKJV, Darby’s, KJ21, Webster’s, etc) render this as, “**be converted**”. If one wishes to stick with the NIV, then look at **Acts 15:3**: “*The church sent them on their way, and as they travelled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad.*” (NIV)

The Greek text that the NIV is taken from uses the same root word in both of these passages, only the tense is different (epistrepho/epistrophe).

So now the question must be asked, what Peter meant by saying, “*Be converted?*”

He told them to “*repent and be converted.*” So it is highly unlikely “*be converted*” means just to repent. Otherwise, Peter would then be saying, “*Repent and repent.*” No, he must have been saying to repent and *something else* in addition to repentance. To a Jew in the first century, to “convert” meant something they all understood. A Jew was *born* into their religion so there was no need to *convert*. Conversion was for those outside of Israel, that is, the Gentiles. And for Gentiles to convert to being a Jew they had to **adopt the Jewish set of beliefs (i.e. repent)** and then, to complete this conversion and have their status changed, they were to undergo *tevillah*, which is where they *immerse themselves in a water bath* called a *mikveh*.

“Mikveh” or “mikvah” is defined as follows:

“Mikvah” – (f., pl. “Mikvaot”); a ritual pool of water, used for the purpose of attaining ritual purity. Immersion in a Mikvah is performed for the following main purposes:

It is used in connection with Repentance, to remove the impurity of sin.

It is also used in connection with Conversion, because the convert has taken upon himself or herself to adopt the lifestyle of the Jew, that is based on the recognition of God as King of the Universe and on the obligation to perform the commandments of the Torah.

Regarding the practice of baptizing proselytes, Lightfoot, in *Horae Hebraicae* explains: “As soon as he grows whole of the wound of circumcision, they bring him to Baptism, and being placed in the water they again instruct him in some weightier and in some lighter commands of the Law. Which being heard, he plunges himself and comes up, and, behold, he is an Israelite in all things.”

In **Acts 2:38** Peter says, “**Repent and be baptized...**” A short while later, he says, “**Repent and be converted...**” Did Peter change his story so soon? Or is he saying the same thing? Jews understood that the conversion process involved *tevillah*—which is the Jewish term for what Christians call *baptism*. (See explanation of **John 3:1-5**) So although Peter did not use the word “baptism” in **Acts 3:19** he was speaking of it! **The phrase, “Repent and be baptized...” is synonymous with “Repent and be converted...”**

John 3:16 – “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*”

This is perhaps the most often quoted verse in the New Testament. It is often isolated and set apart from the rest of the dialogue in which it took place. **To “believe in Jesus” means to believe the gospel message, and baptism is a part of that gospel message.** It must also be remembered this

verse is only one small part of a much larger conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus. **Verse 16** (of **chapter 3**) deals with **faith** in the Son. **Repentance** is talked about in regards to the snake that was lifted up and then again in **verses 19-21**.

Verses 3 and **5** deal with **baptism**. This shows the importance of looking at the overall picture and not focusing in on any single verse or passage.

Furthermore, the NIV (and some others) is a translation that uses the word “shall” in **John 3:16**. All other translations render this verse, “...*whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” The NIV erroneously takes a “maybe” and turns it into a “will be”. **God gave us His Son so that we shouldn’t have to perish.**

According to the inspired James, *faith alone, by itself, will not save us:*

James 2:19-20 – “*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that **faith without deeds is useless?**” Many people prefer to believe what men say than what the Holy Spirit says.*

Faith must have actions to back it up with.

Acts 16:30-31 – “*He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”*

This verse is often quoted but then the questioner *stops short right in the middle of the story*. People who teach salvation by faith alone like to quote **verses 30** and **31** but they don’t quote **verses 32** and **33**. Those very next two verses state that the Word of the Lord was preached to them and then they were **immediately baptized**. We know from **James 2:19-20** that the jailer did not stop once he had a belief in Jesus. Indeed, there *was* more as **verses 32-33** illustrate so clearly. See **Acts 16:16-33** for more detail. It does no good to tell someone about baptism unless they are first told the message of Jesus Christ. The first step is to believe, *then* baptism will be effectual. Faith in Christ is what gives baptism its significance. Obviously, it does no good to tell someone to get baptized unless they have first heard the message of the cross and the story of Jesus.

Romans 10:9-10 – “*That if you **confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,”** and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*”

Remember first, Paul just finished explaining in **chapter 6**, and in great detail, the role of baptism. This verse does not nullify that chapter. But it is of significance, however, to note the commentary on this verse in the NIV study Bible that states, – “*Jesus is Lord*”, *the earliest confession of Christian faith,*

probably used at baptism.” The verbal confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ is made at *baptism*, and is what is seen in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch in **Acts 8**. Notice the eunuch asks to be baptized and Philip tells him “**if you believe with all your heart, you may.**” And then the Ethiopian eunuch confesses faith in Christ with his mouth, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” He is then *baptized*. This model is also referred to in the first letter of Paul to Timothy:

1Timothy 6:12-14 – “*Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called **when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,***”

The reference to “eternal life” and the “good confession” makes perfect sense in the light of the correct understanding of baptism. It makes even more sense when one understands also, since the first century, it has always been the practice to make a verbal confession of faith in Christ **at baptism**. This passage is a reference to that very practice. The confession Jesus made before Pilate was, of course, that He was indeed the Christ.

There are several verses that speak of *belief* and what is *tied* with that *belief* and being *saved*:

Confess with mouth and believe will be saved (**Romans 10:9-10**)

Believe and is baptized will be saved (**Mark 16:16**)

Believe will be saved....and are then baptized (**Acts 16:16-33**)

Notice belief never stands alone, by itself. There is always some other **action** associated with it. Jesus started preaching by telling us to “**repent and believe the Good News.**” Jesus also said in **Luke 13:3** that unless we *repent* we will all perish. So we can add one more to the above list:

Repent and believe (**Mark 1:15**)

Remembering we cannot isolate one verse from another, but putting all these scriptures together, let’s see what kind of a picture we get:

Confess with mouth **and believe** will be saved.

Believe and is *baptized* will be saved.

Believe will be saved....and are then *baptized*.

Repent and believe.

What is tied to *believing*?

Repentance – Confession – Baptism

Looking at it from another angle, notice also that **baptism** always has something else **tied to it**:

Believing (Acts 8:37; Mark 16:16)

Repentance (Acts 2:38) (Luke 13:3,5)

Confession of faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 8:36-37)

Which all leads to:

Being baptized (in water) for the forgiveness of sins.

This is where we get:

1. **Hear** the Word
2. **Believe**
3. **Repent** of our sins
4. **Confess** faith in Christ
5. **Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins**

It is that simple. But men like Mr. Stewart who say that baptism is: **(uh oh! This is damnable heresy!)** are in the same category that we read in **Mark 7:1-9** – “⁶...Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷in vain do they worship me, **teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**’ ⁸**You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.**” ⁹And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!”

Once more, Mr. Stewart, is baptism a **COMMANDMENT of the Lord** or of men? Answer: Of the Lord – Of Men.

Which one is your answer? If it is of men, then I agree, **(uh oh! This is damnable heresy!)** but if it is of THE LORD, do you still believe that it is an: **uh oh! This is damnable heresy!**

Mr. David J. Stewart concludes:

The Church of Christ is a false religion, just as are the [Lutherans](#) and the [Seventh-Day Adventists](#)! ONLY through simple faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ can any sinner go to Heaven (1st Peter 1:18-19).

MY ANSWER:

Mr. Stewart seems to be ignorant of the meaning of the words ‘church’ and ‘religion.’ He pretends that he has authority to decide on every subject who is right and who is wrong, who is saved and who is lost, etc. Now we have another declaration from him that “The Church of Christ is a false religion.” He does not even know the difference between the word ‘church’ the word ‘religion.’ Let us see what they are.

I have already explained about the church of Christ that I am a member of it that it is **not** the Church of Christ that Mr. Stewart is referring to. He

only thinks *in a denominational sense* and NOT in the *Biblical sense* of the church of Christ (**Matthew 16:17; Romans 16:16**. See **pages 8-9** about this).

Church: When Jesus met with His disciples near Caesarea-Philippi, He inquired concerning how others were identifying Him. Several opinions were proffered. He then pressed for their view. Peter responded, confessing Jesus as “*the Christ, the Son of God.*” The Lord pronounced a blessing upon his apostle and declared that upon this “rock” (the truth of that declaration) He would build *His church*.

The Greek term for “church” is *ekklesia* (found 114 times in the New Testament). In a **Christian** context, the word is employed in four senses:

(1) It represents the body of Christ **worldwide**, over which the Lord functions as Head (**Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22; 1 Timothy 3:15**).

(2) The expression can refer to God’s people in a given **region** (**Acts 9:31**, ASV, ESV).

(3) Frequently, it depicted a **local congregation** of Christians (**1 Corinthians 1:2; Revelation 1:11**).

(4) “Church” could also signify a group of the Lord’s people **assembled** for worship (**1 Corinthians 14:34-35**).

For years gospel preachers have called attention to the etymology of *ekklesia*. The word is a compound of two segments: *ek*, a preposition meaning “out of,” and a verb, *kaleo*, signifying “to call”—hence, “to call out.”

Religion:—“*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*” (**James 1:27**).

James highlights two main forms of external outworking of faith: the religion of **words** and the religion of **works**.

Words: “*If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless*” (v.26).

Mr. Stewart thinks that he is very religious, and because he believes in the false theory of “eternal security”, it does not matter whether he bridles his tongue or not. He has the right to call others “*wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, wayward, foolish, liars.*” But God tells him that his “**religion is useless.**” Speech must match action; or else, speech is empty gonging.

James 3:8-9 – “⁸*but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.* ⁹*With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.*”

Is it not this what you are doing, Mr. Stewart, when you are calling *people who are made in the likeness of God* “*wolves in sheep clothing, idiots, wayward, foolish, liars*”?

Works: “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*” (v.27).

Speech must match action; or else, speech is empty gonging. What does it profit if a man says to a brother or sister naked and destitute of daily food, “*Depart in peace, be warmed and filled*”, but gives neither garment nor food to fill those needs?” (James 2:16). Words *emptied of works* can fill no need. A religious character limited to words (no matter how theologically profound) is a theatrical absurdity. I may sit here in my room and dream, write, speak, and even be applauded for my “love” for the down-trodden and despised people of the world; but, if my heart is not strong enough to drive me into their midst, to touch them in their infirmity and to embrace them with Christ’s love, my religion is still a vanity, my love unreal and vain. The Good Samaritan is more justified than the religious priest or the Levite. One who loves his neighbour ties his/her wounds and serves him/her in his/her need. *This is the essence of pure and spotless religion.* You see, Mr. Stewart how mistaken you are when you teach that a person is saved by faith only?

You see, Mr. Stewart that it is not “ONLY through simple faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ can any sinner go to Heaven (1st Peter 1:18-19)! You fell again into the snare of Satan by taking a verse out of its context to prove you belief.

Will you go to heaven, Mr. Stewart, if you *do not bridle your tongue*? Do you go to heaven, Mr. Stewart, if you do not “*visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and do not keep yourself unspotted from the world*”?

What kind of religion do YOU have? Is it a PRACTICING religion? Does it go beyond the walls of a building? Does it go beyond the printed pages of the Bible? Does it go beyond a superficial hearing of the Word? Is it a PRACTICAL religion? Does it consist of more than JUST “going to church, reading, and praying”? Does it reach out and manifest itself in compassion to those in need? Is it a PERSONAL religion? Going beyond what we may do in conjunction with others? Including our personal involvement apart from what others may do? And is it a PURE religion? Involving our initial cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ as we in faith repented and were baptized? Involving our continual cleansing by the blood of Christ as we confess our sins and repent of them? Does it include a putting away of sin with the help of God so that we might be “unspotted by the world”? If not, then whatever religion we have is USELESS and we are simply DECEIVING OURSELVES!

Mr. David J. Stewart, mere inability to grasp a fact is no argument against its reality. I hope that you will come to realize the importance of the **command given by our beloved Lord** to be baptized for the remission of sins. The wayward minister of the church of Christ is right in telling you what is the plan of God of salvation, that is:

1. HEAR
2. BELIEVE
3. REPENT
4. CONFESS
5. **BAPTISM**

And, please, realize how wrong you are to call *a command of the Lord*, **uh oh! This is damnable heresy!**, and ask Him to forgive you. Start teaching lost souls the truth so that they can be saved in God's way and not be lost.

Hosea 4:6 – “*⁶My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*”

The proper end of Bible teaching is to instil knowledge that will change thinking and mould lives to conform to that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My conclusion is this, Mr. David J. Stewart:

James 3:1 – “*¹My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*”

James 3:8-12 – “*⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.*”

Ephesians 2:6-8 – “*⁶Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*”

Ephesians 5:6 – “*⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*”

Acts 5:29 – “*²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.”*”

Acts 28:25-27 – “²⁵And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, **Well spake the Holy Ghost** by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, ²⁶Saying, Go unto this people, and say, **Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:** ²⁷For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; **lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.**”

2 Corinthians 13:14 – “⁴The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

For more information contact:

Knisja Ta' Kristu – (Church of Christ)
Flat 1, Polytechnic Flats,
íúÙè Debono Square,
Msida. MSD 10
MALTA
e-mail: info@churchofchristmalta.com
or website: www.churchofchristmalta.com