

How did the Israelites dress in the Wilderness, when Deuteronomy 22:5 was written?

There are a lot of myths surrounding the way that the Israelites dressed when Deu. 22:5 was written. My experience is that most people assume that the Israelites wore robes. Many seminary graduates and authors of non-scholarly commentaries (I.e., study Bibles, devotional commentaries, etc) will also refer to the Israelites wearing robes.

But what did the Israelites really wear? It seems that people have a vague impression that everyone in ancient times wore robes. Combine that with images of Charlton Heston parting the Red Sea in *The Ten Commandments* and you've got a recipe for myth being repeated as fact.

In this article I will present two citations from [Nelson's new illustrated Bible manners & customs : How the people of the Bible really lived](#). This is one of the best reference books available on biblical customs in my opinion.

Citation 1: How the Israelites dressed in Egypt

"Women during the Middle Kingdom [Joseph's time period] and Empire periods [the time of the Exodus] commonly wore a long, white close-fitting dress (a sheath) held up with wide shoulder straps and extending to the ankles. Sometimes they covered their breasts and sometimes they did not. Surviving dresses show that the dresses were more baggy than the artists portray them. During the Empire the sheath dress became an undergarment. Over this, women wore a pleated, fringed robe consisting of a single piece of cloth, gathered around the waist and with the two top corners pulled over the

shoulders and knotted under the breasts. Within this generalization, individuality was achieved with distinctive lines, embroidery, lace, and other decoration.

Servant girls usually wore only a skirt or apron while working. Dancing girls, musicians, singers and young waitresses commonly wore nothing but some jewelry." ((Vos, H. F. (1999). Nelson's new illustrated Bible manners & customs : How the people of the Bible really lived (66). Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson Publishers.))

Citation 2: How the Israelites dressed in the Wilderness

"As to styles, all we know for certain is the clothing of the priests and the high priest, as described above. The rest of the people would have dressed much as they did while in Egypt. In fact, as noted, they came from Egypt in Egyptian garb. What appears on the subject in the last chapter [the first paragraph that I cited] should be reviewed. Since it is very hot in the Sinai during the day, presumably men often wore only linen kilts and women full-length, light weight, loose-fitting dresses. But it gets cold in the Sinai at night and the people needed something to keep them warm. Therefore it may be assumed that men and women owned long cloaks to wear at night or in high altitudes or to use as a blanket. Cloaks served as blankets at night even in New Testament Palestine." ((Vos, H. F. (1999). Nelson's new illustrated Bible manners & customs : How the people of the Bible really lived (103). Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson Publishers.))

Closing Comments:

I hope that these citations prove helpful to people who are studying Deu. 22:5 and the meaning of "men's apparel." If you are studying the "pants" issue then you might also be

interested in two other articles I have written about this subject:

1. [What does the Bible say about women wearing pants?](#)
 2. [Response to UPC Bible study on wearing pants](#)
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A Spontaneous Post About “The Bible Days”

Hi, folks, it's been several months since I have written any new content for this site. I have monitored the comments and have re-written and tweaked several articles, but it's been too long since I have written anything new.

I have had many friends and acquaintances ask me to write an article about hair, so that's what I've been working on lately. I have also been working on a couple of other projects related to this Web site that I am not ready to share just yet :)

Anyway, tonight I was reading a thread on an apostolic forum about the hair issue. In one of the posts someone talked about what they did “in the Bible days.” It suddenly struck me that I don't think I've written anything about “the Bible days” yet on this Web site! So, let me get out my soapbox and I'll tell all of you, my dear readers, about something that was one of my pet peeves when I was in the UPC.

Growing up in the Apostolic movement I often heard talk about what people did “in Bible times.” I've always loved history, so I loved to hear about what people did back then. It was not until I got older and started studying biblical history that I realized a fact that many seem to forget: “Bible times” covers

approximately 4,000 years of history. Furthermore, it isn't just Jewish history that is covered. In the Bible you have Canaanites, Mideonites, Romans, Assyrians, Babylonians, and a host of others. Jewish history alone covers about 1,600 years (if you start counting at Moses and stop at Revelation) or more if you start counting at Abraham.

Also, the ancient world was a very dynamic place. Cultures changed back then just like they do today. Allow me (since it's my soapbox) to give you a brief history lesson, written off the top of my head, to illustrate how dynamic the ancient world was just for the Jews (not to mention everyone else).

Abraham's descendants went to Egypt and lived there for 400 or so years. Then Moses—a man raised in Egypt but who lived for 40 years in Midian—led them into the wilderness. They lived in the wilderness for 40 years, and came into contact with many other cultures. Then they conquered Canaan and came into contact with the various Canaanite city-states and their cultures. Then the Philistines invaded, and they spent a bit of time interacting with them. Then a few years later their kingdom split into Israel and Judah. Israel interacted heavily with the Assyrians and was eventually conquered by them. Judah was spared, but they in turn were conquered by the Babylonians and most of them spent 70 years or so in Babylon. Then the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians, and the Persians allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. Some of them did, but many of them did not. Of the ones that did, many of them would have been 2nd generation exiled Jews—Jews who's parents had been born and raised in Babylon.

Many of the Jews decided to stay in Persia. They built synagogues and kept their system of worship and their national identity, but they were in constant contact with the Persian culture—a culture that included many conquered kingdoms along with all of their customs. A few years later Persia was conquered by Greece under the leadership of Alexander the Great (yes, I know that Alexander the Great was technically

Macedonian, but his culture was Greek). Even after Alexander the Great's death, the Jews were caught up in the conflicts between the four generals who split his kingdom. During the 400 year intertestamental period the Jews came into contact with every known culture except those in the far east. To be honest, they probably came into contact with some of them too. We know Alexander the Great went as far as India, and it's pretty reasonable to assume that he brought some people back with him.

Then the Romans came along and conquered Greece. They loved Greek culture and so they kept a lot of it around, but they mixed their own culture with it. They used Israel as a sort of frontier outpost—a garrison, if you will. The Jews in Jesus' Day would have mixed with pretty much every race that the Romans came into contact with. That means that they mixed with everyone in the known world.

Speaking of the Romans, they allowed their conquered subjects to keep their sense of identity and worship intact. It was one way that they maintained order in the empire. That's important to know, because it means that one Roman city might have a completely different culture than one just 60 or 70 miles from it. Remember, this was in the days before photographs, magazines, TVs, Internet, and mechanized transportation. Even now in the U.S. there is a wide culture gap between, say, New York and New Orleans. How much wider would that gap be if you had to walk or ride a horse between those two cities, and, unless you traveled there, the only knowledge you had of them was what was told to you by travelers?

My point here is simple: Bible times changed. A lot. To say that something happened “in Bible times” is *tremendously* misleading. Whenever anyone says it to me I respond by asking, “Which Bible time?” Something that was a Jewish cultural norm in 1,500 B.C. might be anathema to them in 50 A.D.

Here's a classic example of how the “Bible times” thing can

lead to a misleading sense of history. In the forum that I was reading tonight one person wrote that “in the Bible days” if a woman sinned then the city officials publicly shaved her head. I have no idea if that was ever a custom in any ancient city (odds are that someone, somewhere tried it as a sin deterrent...it sounds pretty effective). However, I really doubt that it was ever a custom in Corinth. I’ve researched Corinth customs pretty extensively and I’ve never heard of it. (One reason that it seems unlikely for Corinth to have a custom like that is because the people of Corinth were generally pretty proud of their sin; they were one of the most sinful cities in the Roman empire.)

I’ve read and heard plenty of variations of this theme. I’ve heard that prostitutes shaved their head, and so Paul was telling women in Corinth that if they cut their hair they might as well just shave it. I’ve heard that it was a shame for a woman to go outside without a veil, and so what Paul was really saying was that women should wear veils to church, and that if they didn’t then they should just shave their head. (That last theory doesn’t explain why women would stop wearing veils in the first place—especially to church—or why shaving their head would be such a bad punishment.) I’ve heard that Corinth had a feminist movement that was cutting their hair out of rebellion, and Paul was telling them that if they were going to do that then they might as well shave it (this theory is usually combined with the “prostitutes shaved their head theory”). There are many more, but you get the picture.

In reality, though, it’s pretty hard to know exactly what was customary in Corinth and what was not. Corinth was an incredibly dynamic city. It sat on the Isthmus of Corinth—a very narrow strip of land dividing two gulfs. The strip of land was very narrow, and the way around the peninsula very long, so sailors needing to get from one gulf to the next would just pull their ships across. It was sort of like an ancient Panama Canal. These sailors were from every port, and

had visited every port, so you can imagine how fast the city changed. It was constantly in flux. It's very, very hard to go back 2,000 years and get an archaeological snapshot of what the customs were and what the city was like when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. (That is why you will find that many commentaries have conflicting information on the customs of Corinth; many of them have a real custom but they have placed it in the wrong time. Generally speaking, the more recent the commentary is the more accurate it will be—at least about the culture of the city.)

Well, it's late now, but I think you get the gist of what I am saying. Biblical times changed. A lot. One city might undergo tremendous change within a year. Something that they did in the "Bible times" of 10th century B.C. Jerusalem might not have ever been thought of, or even heard of, in 1st century Rome.

So, the next time that you hear someone say that someone did something "in Bible times" don't take their word for it. Research it for yourself :). Oh, and speaking of research, here's one great tool that you can use: [Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs: How the People of the Bible Really Lived](#). Check it out, it's awesome.

OK, I'm going to go put up my soapbox now. Good night, and thanks for reading!

I Am Apostolic

Last Friday night I went to the final service for the UPC National Youth Congress 2007, held in Charlotte, NC. The worship leader who started the service got everyone "fired up" by telling the story of a conversation he had with a Muslim

friend. He said that the Muslim friend asked him why all of the UPC women had long hair. His answer to his Muslim friend was, “Because we’re Christian!!” Of course he also told his Muslim friend that he believed in just one God, not in the Trinity! (The implication being that everyone who believes in the Trinity believes in three gods; belief in three gods is actually tritheism—a belief held by the Mormons—, not Trinitarianism, but that’s a discussion for a different article.)

So, that happened last Friday night. Then on Monday or Tuesday night I got in a long discussion with a Mormon. It was a very one-sided discussion since he didn’t give me a chance to talk. He just sat there and talked over me and just kept raising his voice when I tried to say anything. Interestingly enough, the Mormon gentleman also claimed to have “apostolic” doctrine. He claimed to believe what the apostles really taught. I’m not comparing the UPC to Mormonism, I’m only pointing out that quite a few groups with very different doctrines all claim to believe what the apostles really taught.

So where does this leave me? It leaves me with the belief that I am apostolic. The reason? I believe what the apostles taught. It’s really quite simple. It only becomes complicated when people try to come up with “new” revelations or new ideas that convince them and their followers that they alone really have truth and that everyone else is part of the “great falling away.”

Anyway, I believe what the apostles taught, and that makes me Apostolic. Here’s what they taught, and here’s what I believe:

Note: If this article looks like it’s really, really long then don’t worry; it’s not! A good portion of this article is composed of Scripture citations. I’ve pasted the Scriptures at the end of the article so that they will be easier to read. I have also put hyperlinks next to the Scripture references; you can click on them to be taken to the passage on-line.

Christ:

I believe that Jesus was and is Immanuel, God with us (Mat. 1:23¹) and that He was born of the Virgin Mary (Mat. 1:23¹). How was He both God and man? Frankly, I don't know and I really don't care. All that I know is that there is only one God (Deu. 6:4²) and Jesus is Him. Any attempt at explanation beyond that is nothing more than the mind of finite man trying to understand the workings of an infinite God. It will only result in useless debate—something which we were told by Paul to abstain from (1 Tim. 1:3-7³).

I believe that Jesus was the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1-2, 14⁴). I don't know how God incarnated His Word, but He did. I guess being all-powerful lets Him do stuff like that.

I believe that Jesus "died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4⁵). I believe that Jesus rose bodily from the dead, just like He said He would in John 2:18-21⁶.

Justification (e.g., Salvation):

(Note: The word "justified" means "to be made righteous." It's what we mean today when we say salvation or being saved. To be justified means to be made acceptable to God [7].)

What do I believe about justification? I believe what the apostles John and Paul said about justification. This makes me Apostolic.

John said that those who received Christ were given the right to become children of God (John 1:10-13⁸). Paul wrote that no person would be justified by the works of the Law (Rom. 3:20⁹). He went on to say that a person is justified as a gift by the

grace of God (Rom. 3:24⁹), and that the justification comes by faith, not by works of the Law (Rom. 3:28⁹). He said that since we have “been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1¹⁰), and that since we are “justified by Christ’s blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom. 5:9¹¹).

Paul made it abundantly clear that a person is justified by faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16¹²). Interestingly enough, He also made it clear that it is only faith, and nothing else, that justifies us (Rom. 3:28⁹; Gal. 2:16¹²). This means that if a person has faith in anything other than Christ for their salvation then they are trusting that thing for their salvation, not Christ. So, let me ask you: Where’s your faith? Is it in your baptism? If you believe that you are saved because you were baptized the “right way” (I.e., in the Name of Jesus or in a Mormon temple) then that means that your faith is in your baptism, not in Jesus. If you believe that you are saved because you spoke in tongues then that means that your faith is in your tongues, not in Jesus.

Sanctification (e.g., Holiness, or Ongoing Righteousness after Justification):

I believe that Christ rose again so that we can live for Him (2 Cor. 5:15¹³). I also believe that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17¹³). This means that sin does not have dominion over those who are saved (Rom. 6:11-15¹⁴). Notice that I did not say sin should not have dominion, I said that it does not have dominion. We all slip up and commit sins, but the apostle John made it clear that when that happens “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and

He Himself is the propitiation [covering] for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2¹⁵).

I believe that if anyone claims to be saved but they continue to live a lifestyle of sin without true repentance then they have turned "the grace of our God into licentiousness and [they are denying] our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4¹⁶). The word licentiousness means, amongst other things, "debauchery, sexual excess, absence of restraint, insatiable desire for pleasure, arrogance, insolence referring to words, wantonness, lustfulness, excessive pleasure, perversion in general ("G766", The Complete Word Study Dictionary).

With this in mind, I believe that a person is known by their "fruits" (Mat. 7:16-20¹⁷). Jesus said that, not an apostle, so I guess that makes me "Jesus-tolic." Just so there isn't any confusion, Paul (who was an apostle) clarified what the deeds (or fruits) are. According to Paul, the fruits of the flesh are: "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Gal. 5:19-21¹⁸). Unfortunately, I've known a lot of "One God Apostolic tongue-talkin' Holy Rollin' Born Again Believers in the Liberating Power of Jesus' Name" who faithfully grow the fruits of the flesh.

On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit (notice that the word fruit is singular, not plural) is: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23¹⁸). One of the things that caused me to first start questioning Oneness Pentecostal doctrine was the sheer number of Oneness Pentecostals filled with the deeds of the flesh and the sheer number of Trinitarian Christians who were cultivating the fruit of the Spirit. The Oneness

Pentecostals would tell me that this is not sufficient evidence for salvation, but unfortunately the apostle John (note the emphasis on the word apostle) disagrees with them when he writes, “By this we know that we have come to know [Christ], if we keep His commandments....The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected....By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:3-6¹⁹).

So it seems that growing the fruit of the Spirit and “walking like Christ walked” is valid evidence of a true relationship with God. On the other hand, growing the fruits of the flesh is valid evidence of the lack of a true relationship with God. That should scare a lot of Oneness Pentecostals. Especially when they see “big name” preachers speaking at rallies and initiating “mighty moves of God,” but they know that those same big name preachers are filled with jealousy and pride and that they are causing division, and that they have a real shortage of patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control in their lives. Some would say that I am being too judgmental at this point, but I disagree: the apostle John told us to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1²⁰). Unfortunately, every movement that produces great emotion and tongues is not of God. (Here’s an interesting bit of trivia: The Mormons regularly spoke in tongues years before Azusa Street; see the article “[Speaking In Tongues And The Mormon Church](#)” from Berean Christian Ministries for more information.)

Please understand that I do not say this to pick on Oneness Pentecostals. There are plenty of Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc., who grow the fruits of the flesh too. There are also plenty of them who are truly saved and who grow

the fruit of the Spirit. I am only pointing out that true Apostolic doctrine has nothing to do with speaking in tongues, and everything to do with trusting Christ for salvation and showing the evidence of that salvation by the fruit of the Spirit that grows in our lives when we are branches attached to the Vine (John 15:4-5²¹).

Summary:

Now you know what I believe. I am Apostolic. I believe in One God Who's Name is Jesus; I believe in justification through faith and sanctification by ongoing grace through faith; I believe that the evidence of salvation is shown through the fruit that grows in a person's life. Furthermore, I believe that we all make mistakes and display our old unregenerated nature occasionally, but that the sign of salvation is that a person becomes more and more like Christ as time goes on. Furthermore, I believe that this Christ-like nature can only be produced by the grace of God when a person (branch) is grafted into Christ (the Vine) (John 15:4²¹; [Rom. 11](#)).

Now, let me ask you: Do we really need more than this? In a nutshell I have summed up Apostolic doctrine. Moreover, I've done it on the spur of the moment at work and in less than two hours. I'm not saying that to brag about my biblical knowledge, I am saying it to make the exact opposite point: Apostolic doctrine is simple! A person doesn't need a "new revelation" and they don't need 16 gazillion Bible studies on why the Trinity is wrong and Oneness is correct (or vice versa). (For that matter, if a person believes that they are saved because of their belief in Oneness doctrine or Trinitarian doctrine then their faith is in the wrong place anyway). There's One God, Jesus is His Name, and our faith needs to be in Him, not in how He accomplished the Incarnation.

That's it. That's the gospel. It's Apostolic doctrine, and

it's what I believe.

I am Apostolic.

Oh, and one more thing: Here's what I don't believe. I don't believe that Christians should divide and fight over non-salvation issues such as what's said over you in baptism, the meaning of baptism, the nature of the Godhead, whether or not individuals are predestined, whether or not a person can "lose their salvation," or what color the bathrooms are painted. I told that to a UPC friend one time and she mockingly asked me if I was just saying that we should all love each other and throw doctrine out the window. Well, I'm certainly not saying to throw doctrine out the window, but I am saying that we should hold fast to primary doctrines but avoid turning molehills into mountains (or unity into division) when it comes to issues that have absolutely nothing to do with a person's salvation (such as eternal security or the color of the bathrooms).

And I am also saying that yes, we should love one another. Read [Romans 14](#)...especially the part where Paul says, "Who are you to judge the servant of another....To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (4²²), and then skip down to verse 17²³ and read, "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." When I read the New Testament I find that Paul brings up the subject of love and unity more times than I have tried to count, so it sounds to me like Paul considered it a lot more important than most of the things that Christians fight and divide over.

*In Christ,
Josh Spiers*

References:

All Scripture references are from the 1995 edition of the NASB text unless otherwise noted.

Words that are in all capital letters are printed that way by the NASB editors to show that the author is quoting from an Old Testament text.

Words in bold print are words that I have bolded for emphasis.

1. Mat 1:23

(23) “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.”

2. Deu 6:4

(4) “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! Note: Lest a Oneness believer thinks that the NASB has “Trinitarianized” this passage, I would like to point out that the JPS (Jewish Old Testament, who’s translators firmly do not believe in the Trinity) translates this passage the same way.

3. 1Ti 1:3-7

(3) As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

(4) nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.

(5) But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

(6) For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,

(7) wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

4. Joh 1:1-2

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(2) He was in the beginning with God.

(14) And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

5. 1Co 15:3-4

(3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

(4) and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

6. Joh 2:18-21

(18) The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"

(19) Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

(20) The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

(21) But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

7. "G1344". The Complete Word Study Dictionary

8. Joh 1:10-13

(10) He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

(11) He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

(12) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

(13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

9. Rom 3:19-28

(19) Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

(20) because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the

knowledge of sin.

(21) But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

(22) even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

(23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

(24) being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

(25) whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

(26) for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

(27) Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

(28) For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

10. Rom 5:1

(1) Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...

11. Rom 5:8-9

(8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

(9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

12. Gal 2:16

(16) nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be

justified.

13. 2Co 5:14-17

(14) For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

(15) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

(16) Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.

(17) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

14. Rom 6:11-15

(11) Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

(12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,

(13) and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

(14) For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

(15) What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

15. 1Jn 2:1-2

(1) My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

(2) and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

16. Jud 1:4

(4) For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this

condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

17. Mat 7:16-20

(16) "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

(17) "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

(18) "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

(19) "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

(20) "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

18. Gal 5:18-24

(18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

(19) Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

(20) idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

(21) envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

(23) gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

(24) Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

19. 1Jn 2:3-6

(3) By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

(4) The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

(5) but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

(6) the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

20. 1Jn 4:1

(1) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

21. Joh 15:4-5|

(4) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

(5) "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

22. Rom 14:4

(4) Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

23. Rom 14:17

(17) for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The loss of our heroes

It seems that the hardest problem for people to face when they leave the UPC is the one of figuring out what they believe and who they can trust. I know it's an issue that I faced, and from the forums that I have participated in and the discussions that I have been a part of I know that others have faced it well.

Today I was thinking about this and it struck me that if a person was raised in the UPC (as I was) then their greatest heroes are generally people in the UPC. My heroes were certain preachers who I saw as being full of wisdom and compassion, godliness and grace, mercy and anointing. These were the men that I aspired to be like more than anything else in the world. I wanted to have the tenacity that they had to "hold on to Truth." I wanted to have the anointing that they did and affect people in the same ways that they affected people.

But when I left the UPC I found out that some of my heroes are actually enemies of the gospel. This does not make them bad men—far from it! They are not knowingly enemies of the gospel; they are doing what they are convinced is right. But yet I see that every time they "win a soul" to the UPC they are doing just that—winning a soul to the UPC (which is a far cry from winning a soul to the gospel).

Some might think I'm being melodramatic, but I do not think that it's possible to overestimate the importance of heroes in our lives. We all have them, and we all need them. But where do we go when our heroes are stripped away?

I think that the best place we can go is to Jesus. We can let Him become our hero. And how do we do this? By focusing on His life, His character, and His ministry. After all, isn't our goal to be "just like Jesus"?

I think that the best thing a person can do when leaving the UPC is to pick up a Bible (one that's not the KJV) and read through one or two of the gospels. Then read through some of the epistles (especially James, 1st and 2nd Peter, and Galatians) with the goal of applying it, not just understanding it.

When we leave the UPC we seek so much to understand. We want to understand doctrine and to find out exactly what we believe. But in the last year I have found out that if a

person seeks to just know Christ then understanding will come. This isn't to say that a person should throw head knowledge out the window of course! There's nothing wrong with seeking to understand the Bible. But let your main focus be Christ. After all, isn't it He who shed His blood to redeem us and who rose again so that we might be free?

Why study?

One of the issues that pops up over and over again when people leave the UPC is the issue of trust. I was reminded of this again this evening as I was talking with my family about some of the reasons that I left the UPC. As we were talking, my sister-in-law stopped us to ask a question; she wanted to know why all of the study is necessary. She wanted to know why a person can't just read the Bible and be saved. She and my mother even hinted that all of my Bible study might be getting me into trouble with God.

The first thing to understand when answering that question is that the Bible is designed so that anyone can pick it up, read it, and be saved. At the same time, the Bible is an incredibly deep book. If a person picks up three Bibles—let's say the King James Bible, New American Standard Bible, and The Message—then one will rapidly see that all Bible translations are not the same. One does not have to read for very long before they realize that there are many differences, small and large, between Bible translations. The miraculous thing is that the average person could pick up any one of these Bibles, read it, and be saved. God has ensured that the salvation message is not lost.

So why do I do all of the Bible study that I do? The reason is

that I think of Christianity like flying a plane or steering a boat. Very small course corrections lead to major problems over long distances. If I am flying a plane and I am even a part of a degree off then I am going to miss my destination. Unfortunately there are many denominations that are off course right now. There are many individuals within those denominations who are saved, but the denominations as a whole are heading in an unhealthy direction.

I am convinced that the UPC is one of those denominations. That's why I left.

My concern is with the health of Christianity as a whole. I cannot stay in a denomination that I feel is heading in the wrong direction. Of course, none of us will ever agree 100% with every other believer or every other denomination. But I want to align myself with a church that is making every effort possible to stick to Biblical truth.

C.S. Lewis—my favorite Christian author—described Christianity as a table (or he may have been describing God, I forget, but the analogy is still good). He said that it's like a table. You look at the table, and it's really simple. It's got a few legs, it's made of wood, and you put stuff on it. But if you want to know what the table is really made of then you have to understand molecules, atoms, physics, and many other things. It soon becomes impossible for the average person (meaning me) to tell you what a table is made of, or why it stays standing up.

This is the way that Christianity is. It is designed so that a person can look at it and say, “Oh, I need to place my faith in Christ and believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, and follow Him.” But if a person really wants to understand the WHY of Christianity, then you have to go deep. You have to start dealing with the molecules and atoms of theology.

I want to know what makes Christianity tick. I want to go as deep as I can, because that's what I feel that is what God is calling me to do. I understand that not everyone feels the same way, but I have a responsibility to "present [myself] approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 NASB).

Is God upset with my studying? Is He going to deliberately deceive me because I am trying to understand His Word rather than following after men who speak in tongues? I don't think so. John told people to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone into the world" (1 John 4:1 NASB). Now, I don't know how John intended for people to "test the spirits," but the only way that I know to do it is by comparing doctrines to the Word of God. Sure, no one's going to see eye-to-eye on everything any more than every scientist is going to see eye-to-eye on the structure of sub-atomic particles. But I want to be as close to the source as I can get.

I guess if I miss it then I'll have to fall back on the mercy of God, because that's what this whole Christian thing is about anyway. I'm going to try my darndest to be in Truth, but I know that it's not my studying or my knowledge that's going to save me in the end; I will only be saved by "the grace of God" which brings "salvation to all men" (Tit. 2:11).

Why is questioning so bad?

I have a question. Why is it considered so bad to question doctrine in the UPC (and associated organizations)? I don't think that I have ever heard a preacher get up and say that it is wrong to question doctrine, but I spent over 26 years in

the UPC, and the impression that I always had is that it is a horrible sin to question doctrine.

Of course, some doctrines are worse to question than others (according to the typical UPC preacher). The doctrine that is #1 on the list of taboo'd doctrines is the doctrine of the Oneness of God. Other ones are high on the list as well, such as baptism in Jesus' Name, speaking in tongues as the evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost, and more.

But aren't we commanded in the Scriptures to question what we are taught?

For example, look at these Scriptures:

Now these were more noble-minded...for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so (Acts 17:10-12 NASB).

The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked(1Jo 2:4-6 NASB).

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed (Gal 1:6-9 NASB).

Here's something that might shock some members of the UPC (it sure shocked me when I found out!): The "different gospel"

that Paul was writing about was a return to the Mosaic Law!

Think about the implications of this for a moment.

You see, the UPC often uses this Scripture to tell people that anyone who preaches any doctrine other than the Oneness-Pentecostal-Holiness (a.k.a. UPC) doctrine is preaching a “different gospel,” but Paul was saying that the “different gospel” is a gospel that tells people to try to earn their salvation through acts of the Law!

But, you say, the UPC doesn’t teach the Law...or do they?

How about this:

A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God (Deu 22:5 NASB).

That’s straight out of the Mosaic Law! (Remember that the Mosaic Law is not the entire Old Testament, it is only parts of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.)

Is this really important, though? Sure it is! Look at what Paul said here:

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace (Gal 5:1-4 NASB).

See that? “[Y]ou who are seeking to be justified by the law [the Mosaic Law]’ you are fallen from grace.”

(Now, some of you scholars out there might be thinking that

the UPC does not teach that women wearing dresses is necessary for justification. My response is that I don't think the UPC has a clear distinction between justification and sanctification. Everything is all wrapped up together. Like a friend of mine told me the other day, "The UPC is a package deal—take it or leave it." In my whole time in the UPC I can only remember meeting two preachers who could give definitions of justification and sanctification. I certainly never heard the topics preached.)

OK, now that I've satisfied the scholars, let me get back to my original question: What's so bad about questioning what we're taught? Paul told Timothy to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 NASB). John wrote, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1 NASB).

Read through the New Testament and you will see time and time again where people were encouraged to study Scripture. The best example of this is from the passage that I cited at the beginning of this blog:

"The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men' (Act 17:10-12 NASB).

I hardly even need to explain this Scripture passage, but I'll give some quick background. Paul and Silas were going around on a missionary trip, and they came across a group of Christians who were getting together in the local Jewish

synagogue and “examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” What things? The things they were being taught! Did Paul and Silas condemn them for this? Did they tell the Bereans that they needed to just “listen to their pastor”? Did they preach a sermon on David and Saul to the Bereans, letting them know to “touch not God’s anointed”? No! Far from it! Paul and Silas commended them, and said that they were “more noble-minded” than some of the other groups, because they didn’t just receive the word, but they examined the word to make sure that it was correct!

Folks, don’t be afraid to question what the preacher is saying! Just because he claims to be preaching “under the anointing” does not mean that what he is preaching is correct! Just because you get goosebumps and get all excited doesn’t mean that the Spirit of God is approving of the message! Show respect for the preacher, but don’t be afraid to get into the Bible and study Scripture out for yourself! You just might be surprised at what you find when you do! :)