

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!

The Nature of Truth

Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

– John 18:37-38b

If you used to be in the UPC then let me ask you, How many times have you heard someone say that they are thankful "for the Truth"? Or perhaps they said that they were thankful that God revealed "the Truth" to them. Or maybe they talked about

how anointed a non-UPC singer or minister was, and then they said that it was a shame that the person they were talking about "did not have the Truth."

I used to hear those statements all the time! I think that we all have. But I am one of those people who likes to ask "Why" about everything. As a matter of fact, one of my favorite quotes says this:

"Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton was the one who asked why" (Bernard Baruch).

One of the things that many Christians do is rattle off a Scripture or a phrase without stopping to think about what it actually means. I think that we all do that; that's certainly not something that's limited to the UPC! But one thing that you do hear the UPC talk a lot about is "having the Truth." So in this article I want to examine this question: *What does it mean for something to be true?* Once I have investigated the meaning of truth then I will look at two central UPC doctrines to see whether or not they really are "true."

Now, a lot of people might be thinking that I'm silly for asking what it means for something to be true. After all, if something is true then it is...true! But what does that word mean? More specifically, how does the word apply to us Christians?

One good definition of truth is that *it is consistent and it corresponds to reality*. That is the definition that my systematic theology professor repeated until we practically had it coming out our ears! And it is certainly a good definition. Notice that the definition says that truth corresponds to reality, not to itself. The reason it says that is because there are plenty of people who teach and believe that truth just needs to correspond to itself. The problem with this is obvious: If a person starts with an untrue starting point then the rest of their system (whatever it

might be) will also be untrue.

My philosophy professor used evolution as an example of a view of truth that corresponds with itself instead of corresponding to reality. He called it a "mesh" system, meaning that if any one point of it was proven false then a new theory was made to account for the portion that was proven false. In other words, there's no way to prove evolution false to someone who believes strongly in the theory. Why? Because it corresponds with itself, even though many scientists would argue that the actual points of the theory are incorrect. (I believe that the UPC also has a "mesh" view of truth, but that is not the subject that I am discussing in this article!)

The point is this: There is more than one view of truth and knowledge that exists in the world today. For instance, many different religions believe that there is no one correct way to God; they believe that all paths are equally valid ((This is known as "[religious pluralism](#)")). The Christian view stands in opposition to this because it claims that Jesus is the only way to God, but the religious pluralist responds by saying that the Christian view is right for the Christians but the Muslim view is right for the Muslims, etc.

So with that in mind let us return to the original question: What is truth?

Well, as I already said, my systematic theology professor defined truth as *that which is consistent and corresponds with reality*. I do believe that is a very good view of truth, so I want to use that for a starting point and break this subject down a little farther. Specifically, I want to explain why truth must be consistent and why it must correspond with itself. To do this we must look at three fundamental laws of logic. These are:

1. The law of non-contradiction
2. The law of the excluded middle

3. The law of identity

Please bear with me here! I know it's easy to zone out as soon as someone writes or says "fundamental laws," but this is important to understanding exactly what truth is! And I promise that it's not that complicated either. Actually, these three laws are very simple and even intuitive.

The law of non-contradiction simply says: *Something cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same respect.* Example: Something cannot be green and not green at the same time and in the same way. That's pretty simple, right? Similarly, I cannot be in my chair and out of my chair at this very moment in time. I am sitting in my chair, and it's impossible for me to not be sitting in my chair at the same time.

The second law, the law of the excluded middle, says: *Something either is or is not.* In other words, something either exists or it does not exist. Something cannot exist and not exist at the same time. Very simple and intuitive!

Finally, the law of identity says: *Something is what it is.* This is very similar to the first law. Something cannot be what it is and what it is not at the same time.

These laws seem very intuitive (and they are) but the reason they are given names is because they serve as a starting point for all discussions. Even if a person does not know the laws by name they know them intuitively. Furthermore, these laws cannot be refuted. It's impossible! Why? Because a person must use one of the laws in order to refute the laws! Give it a try, it's kind of fun! (I tried it when my philosophy professor presented these laws to us, and I found out that they are impossible to refute. I guess all those Ph.D.'s were right after all; at least on this point.)

Now that I've given these three laws let me bring it to a practical level by looking briefly at the UPC's view of

baptism. The UPC view of baptism is that a person must be baptized in the Name of Jesus in order to be saved ((["Why We Baptize In Jesus' Name"](#), Accessed 8/12/2007)). However, it is my experience that many people in the UPC find it hard to accept the idea that God is sending almost every believer for the last 2,000 years to hell because they were baptized the wrong way. So, when backed into a corner, many in the UPC will say something like this:

"I refuse to put anyone in hell; I believe that God might let people into Heaven if they were baptized in the Titles and that was all they knew, but if they see the necessity of being baptized in the Name of Jesus and they refuse to obey 'the Truth' then they are responsible for their disobedience."

That statement sounds really good on the surface, but let's apply the fundamental laws of logic to it. First, this statement is effectively saying that "the Truth" only becomes true once a person sees that it is true.

Think about that for a moment. That is like saying that the speed limit in front of my apartment only becomes 30 miles per hour when I see the sign, and that if I do not see that it is 30 miles per hour then the speed limit does not exist (or that it is not 30 miles per hour). See the fallacy? If the speed limit is 30 miles per hour then it is 30 miles per hour whether or not I realize that it is. In the same way, if baptism in the Name of Jesus is necessary for salvation then it is necessary whether or not a person realizes that it is. On the other hand, if a person can get into Heaven without being baptized in the Name of Jesus then baptism in the Name of Jesus is not necessary for salvation.

Put quite simply: Baptism in the Name of Jesus cannot simultaneously be necessary and unnecessary at the same time.

I believe that the illustration I just gave makes it easier to

understand why the three fundamental laws of logic are so important! A doctrine or belief can sound really good on the surface, but it might not hold up when put to the logical test.

For instance, earlier in this article I commented on the Hindu believe that all paths to God are equally valid. This is what Dr. Norman Geisler has to say about that idea in his book "Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views" (the italics and bold print are added by me for emphasis):

How does one decide on a world view? They cannot all be true, for they hold mutually exclusive views on many essential points. For example, atheism and theism cannot both be true, for atheism affirms that "God does not exist" and theism affirms that "God does exist." Likewise, God cannot be both finite (finite godism) and infinite (theism). Nor can miracles be possible (theism) and impossible (deism, atheism). The opposite of truth is falsehood. Hence, if one view is true, then the opposite must be false, unless, of course, one claims that there is no such thing as truth. But the problem with such a statement is that it claims to be true, thereby defeating its own claim that nothing is true ((Worlds Apart: A Handbook On World Views". Geisler, Norman L., Watkins, William D)).

The last sentence is the most important. Did you catch the problem that Dr. Geisler is pointing out? He is saying that when a person says that all truths are equally valid (such as the pluralist belief that all paths lead to God) then they are claiming absolutely that there is no absolute truth! In other words, they are breaking the law of non-contradiction because they are claiming that there are absolutely no absolutes! They are making a statement that they claim is true, but the statement claims that there can be no truth!

So the pluralist claim that all paths lead to God sounds very

good, just like it sounds good when someone in the UPC claims that baptism in Jesus' Name only becomes necessary once a person realizes it is necessary. But when put to the test we find that both of these views are equally impossible from a logical standpoint. Of course, a person can still choose to believe these things, but they need to recognize that they are believing them purely because of faith and that there is no logical basis (nor can there be) for their view.

So let me summarize what we have covered so far, and then we will move on to examining two central UPC doctrines to see whether or not they are true.

For a general definition of truth I have chosen the definition given by my systematic theology professor: *Truth is that which is consistent and corresponds to reality.* For the rest of this article I am going to use a more specific definition for determining biblical truth:

Biblical truth is that which is consistent and does not conflict with other Scripture.

With that definition in mind let's look at two UPC beliefs to see whether or not they are true. In other words, let's see if these two beliefs *are consistent and do not conflict with other Scripture.*

The first belief that I have chosen to examine is the belief that a person must repent in order to be saved. The official UPC position says:

Luke 13:5...reads, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". [sic] Plainly, then, the tragic alternative to repentance is eternal perdition ((["Except Ye Repent"](#), Accessed 8/12/2007)).

The question that we need to ask is this: Does the UPC belief that a person needs to repent of their sins in order to be

saved contradict other Scriptures? Specifically, does that belief contradict other Scriptures such as Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13, which say that everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved?

On the surface it appears that there is a contradiction, but I am convinced that this contradiction is only an apparent one. I feel that repentance is indeed necessary for salvation. The reason that I believe this is simple: It is impossible to accept Jesus as Savior if a person does not believe that they are in need of saving. In other words, if I do not realize that I am a sinner then why would I call on the Name of the Lord and ask Him for salvation?

On top of this, Jesus commanded repentance (cf. Mat. 4:17, Luke 13:5). If a person blatantly refuses to obey Jesus and repent then I propose that they do not truly believe He is Lord. When a person truly accepts that someone is their Lord then it requires that they admit that they are not Lord. Put bluntly, the most difficult barrier to getting people to come to Christ is getting them to admit that He is God and that they are not.

So, once again, I do not believe there is a real contradiction between the UPC view that repentance is necessary for salvation and the Scriptures that say that a person just needs to call upon the Name of the Lord to be saved. I am convinced that calling on the Name of the Lord involves repentance, so the contradiction is only *apparent*, not *real*.

The score is therefore 1-0 for the UPC. Now let us look at another doctrine that is central to the UPC: The doctrine that says that speaking in tongues is necessary for salvation.

(Before I begin I should point out that the UPC view is that the Holy Ghost is necessary for salvation, and on this point I agree with them, just like every other evangelical Christian does. However, speaking in tongues is synonymous with the Holy

Ghost to the UPC (since they believe that the initial evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost is that a person speaks in tongues (["The Gift of the Holy Ghost"](#), Accessed 8/12/2007)), so that is why I say that I am examining the UPC doctrine that says that speaking in tongues is necessary for salvation.)

The UPC uses three Scripture passages to "prove" that speaking in tongues is the evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost: Acts 2:1-4, Acts 10:44-48, and Acts 19:1-6 ((Ibid.)). From these three passages the UPC extracts the doctrine that "The initial, outward evidence [of receiving the Holy Ghost] is speaking in tongues, which means speaking miraculously in languages the speaker does not know ((Ibid.))."

But is this doctrine true, or does it contradict other Scripture? Specifically, does it contradict 1 Cor. 12:28-30, which says:

1Co 12:28-30 (NASB, bold print added for emphasis)

(28) And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

(29) All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?

*(30) All do not have gifts of healings, do they? **All do not speak with tongues, do they?** All do not interpret, do they?*

It is obvious from the context that Paul is asking rhetorical questions and that the answer to each question is "No." It is very important that Paul did **not** ask, "**All do not have the gift of tongues**"; Instead, he asked, "**All do not speak with tongues, do they?**" (This is a crucial difference since the UPC believes that Paul was talking about the gift of tongues in this passage, which the UPC believes is separate from "tongues as the initial evidence of the Holy Ghost." It is my opinion that if every believer who received the Holy Ghost was

speaking in tongues *then Paul never would have worded his question in the matter that he did*. His goal was to cut down on confusion in the church at Corinth, not add to it!)

So at this point in the discussion the UPC has three Scripture passages that they claim are examples of people speaking in tongues when they initially received the gift of the Holy Ghost. From this they extrapolate the doctrine that all believers speak in tongues when they receive the Holy Ghost. In contrast to this we have a direct statement from Paul saying that all believers do not speak with tongues.

This definitely appears to be a true contradiction, but let us keep looking.

The question that we need to ask next is this: Are there any examples of people being filled with the Holy Ghost or receiving the Holy Ghost when they did *not* speak with tongues? Interestingly enough, there is one example: Paul himself.

Act 9:17-19a NASB (bold print added for emphasis)

*(17) So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may **regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.**"*

*(18) And **immediately** there fell from his eyes something like scales, and **he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;***

(19) and he took food and was strengthened.

Apparently Ananias did not plan on wasting any time. He walked in the door and told Paul that he had been sent for two reasons: 1) that Paul would regain his sight and 2) that Paul would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then Ananias gets right down to business; he lays his hands on Paul and Paul's vision is restored. Then what happened? Paul got baptized. Then what happened? He ate a meal.

And that's it.

No mention of tongues.

So it appears that the UPC's claim that "Speaking with other tongues has been connected with Spirit baptism since the beginning of the church age" ((Ibid.)) commits the sin of omission by failing to include every applicable example of people being filled with the Holy Ghost. It is also interesting that there is no mention of any of the (approximately) 3,000 believers baptized on the Day of Pentecost speaking in tongues (Acts 2:41).

(Another example of someone being filled with the Holy Ghost and not speaking in tongues is when John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost. According to Luke 1:15 he was filled with the Spirit while still in his mother's womb, and, while it is possible that he spoke in tongues, I find it rather unlikely.)

Also, on closer inspection of the UPC's "proof Scriptures" for tongues being the initial evidence of a person receiving the Holy Ghost we find that one of the passages does not even qualify! Which one? Acts 19:1-6. The careful reader will note that the passage does not say that the 12 disciples were **filled** with the Holy Ghost, it says that the Holy Ghost **came upon** them. This seems like a small difference, but it is a very important one. It was quite common all throughout the Old Testament for the Holy Spirit to "come upon" a person or group of people, yet we know from John 7:39 that the Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified. (For examples of the Holy Ghost coming upon people in the Old Testament see the following Scriptures: Numbers 11:25, 24:2, Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 14:6, 14:19, 15:14, 1 Samuel 10:10, 11:6, 16:13, 19:20, 19:23, 1 Chronicles 12:18, 2 Chronicles 20:14.)

Finally, we have Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:22 which says that tongues is a sign to the *unbeliever*, not the

believer. The UPC view of tongues stands in direct opposition to Paul's statement, because the UPC teaches that tongues is the initial evidence to the believer (and by extension to those around him or her) that they have received the Holy Ghost. So the UPC makes tongues a sign to the believer when it is actually meant to be a sign to the unbeliever.

So, to summarize, we actually have two Scripture passages showing where people spoke in tongues when they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:1-6 and Acts 10:44-48). In contrast to this we have a direct statement by Paul saying that not all believers speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30) and the absence of any record of Paul himself speaking in tongues when he received the Holy Ghost. Last but not least, we have the fact that tongues is supposed to be a sign to the unbeliever, not the believer.

In light of all of this evidence I am forced to conclude that there is a *real* contradiction between the UPC view and the biblical view of tongues. In other words, *the UPC view of tongues is consistent with itself but it is not consistent with the entirety of Scripture*. The fact that the UPC view is consistent with itself makes it sound very good, but when the entirety of Scripture is examined then one finds out that the UPC view is not consistent with the rest of Scripture.

So the score is now UPC 1 – Bible 1.

What can we learn from all of this? Well, if you are reading this article and you have never taken a philosophy course or a course in logic then you probably learned that an idea that seems so simple (like truth) can actually be quite complicated! In all seriousness, though, I am hoping that those who read this article will have a better idea of what truth actually is and that they will know how to apply the basic principles of logic to other doctrines and teachings to find out whether or not they are correct.

It is my hope and prayer that readers will always remember to check out the entirety of Scripture when examining doctrines to find out whether or not the doctrine conflicts with itself logically and whether or not it conflicts with other Scripture.

2 Peter 1:20 (Misinterpreted Scriptures)

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For 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.

Misinterpretation: Used to say that there is only one proper interpretation of Scripture, because no "scripture is of any private interpretation."

Facts: Peter wrote that "no *prophecy* of scripture is of any private interpretation", "not that no *scripture* is of any private interpretation. Please read on before you accuse me of splitting hairs and trying to get around the Scripture! There is a reason I make that distinction.

If one backs up and reads the passage in context then they will quickly see that Peter was telling people that Jesus truly is the Messiah, and that He witnessed Jesus' majesty personally. He then goes on to say that Jesus was the One who was prophesied about, and that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. In other words, no one can get away with claiming that the prophecies about Jesus are debatable.

Here is the passage in context:

2Pe 1:12-21 NASB

(12) Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.

(13) I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder,

(14) knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

(15) And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

(16) For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

(17) For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"—

(18) and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

(19) So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

(20) But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,

(21) for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

While it is true that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, it is also clear that there are some issues that Christians do not see eye-to-eye on—and that's OK! Look at what Paul wrote in Romans 14:

Rom 14:1-8 ESV

(1) As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not

to quarrel over opinions.

(2) One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

(3) Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

(4) Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

(5) One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

(6) The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

(7) For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

(8) If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Paul's point is clear: There are some things that people will disagree on, and that is alright. What matters is that a person's faith is in Christ and that they are honestly striving to serve Him. If they are doing that, then "the Lord is able to make [them] stand" (Rom. 14:4 NASB).

What does the Bible say about

wearing jewelry?

The UPC, along with many other holiness groups, teaches against wearing jewelry. I know that when I was in the movement I took the teaching for granted. I think that many others did as well. If new converts asked questions then the general answer went something like this: "It's an inward change of the heart that is reflected by an outward change of appearance; as Christians we are called to be separate from the world." Alternatively, the new convert might be given a well-meaning lesson on respecting pastoral authority even if we do not "see it for ourselves." If the person questioning is not a new convert then they are often judged as being "cold on God" or "lukewarm." I am ashamed to admit that I was often guilty of judging people that way.

When I was part of the apostolic Pentecostal movement I happily went along with the doctrine of no jewelry without really questioning it. I had this vague idea that there was biblical support for it. There must be, right? Otherwise, why would we be teaching it? It was not until I began to question many of the doctrines of the UPC that I studied the no-jewelry doctrine for myself. When I did, I was surprised to find out that there is literally no biblical support for the doctrine. In fact, the Bible has more *good* to say about jewelry than it does bad!

In this article I will share some Scriptures and make some comments. I think that the Scriptures will speak for themselves, but hopefully you will find my comments beneficial. As always, I encourage you to study Scripture and formulate your own opinions.

What Do Holiness Organizations Say About

Jewelry?

First, let's look at what the UPC and a couple of other apostolic holiness organizations have to say about jewelry. The doctrinal section of the UPC's Web site says:

[The Christian woman] has dedicated herself to the cause of Christianity. This manner of dedication avoids expensive, extravagant clothing and superfluous, ornamental jewelry, permitting only the functional use of a wristwatch and a wedding band to designate her wedlock (([United Pentecostal Church International – Modesty](#), Accessed 2006-12-22)).

Their conclusion comes from these two passages: 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. I will come back to those Scriptures in a moment.

The Articles of Faith of the ALJC—an organization that allows its member churches more autonomy on how much jewelry they allow—also cites 1 Pet. 3:1-5 as “instruction to wives about their behavior and appearance.” (([Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ](#), Accessed 2008-06-23)) They conclude that “Holiness is not only an inward presence of God but it is also reflected in the outward life of the Christian in his conduct in this world.” On the surface this is a very generic statement, and one that every Christian would agree with. In practice, though, the “outward life” is translated into a dress code.

The Articles of Faith of the WPF says:

The glory of the female believer is manifested, among other ways, through the emanation of the divine glory in her appearance (I Peter 3:3,4). All artifice is viewed as obstruction to her authentic beauty and is to be avoided (I Timothy 2:9,10). Jewelry, (I Timothy 2:9), make-up, (II Kings 9:3) dyes, and any other artificiality, as well as immodest apparel, are viewed as attempts to artificially induce beauty (Isaiah 3:16-24 RSV, I Peter 3:1-5) and replace the lost glow

of God's glory as seen in the face of the believer as well as in the heavens. All this is Scripturally associated with Jezebel, who is both an Old Testament (I Kings 18:4, 19:1-2, II Kings 9:7,30), as well as New Testament, example of seduction and artificiality (Revelation 2:20,22). Thus, "cosmetics," derived from "cosmos" (arrangement, as in the universe) are attempts to "make-up" the sparkle and glow, which is normative in the presence of the living God as well as within the believer (Philippians 2:15) (([Worldwide Pentecostal Fellowship](#), Accessed 2008-06-23)).

It is clear that out of the three views the WPF's is both the most restrictive and the one with the most Scripture citations. I could write an entire article responding just to the things that the WPF said in the above quotation (and I probably will). For now I would just like to point out two things. First, Jezebel was never condemned for her artificiality; she was condemned for trying to kill the prophets of God (Rev. 2:20). It is Western society that has associated Jezebel with extreme make-up and jewelry; that idea is not found in the Bible. Second, Phil. 2:14-15 is talking about not grumbling and disputing. The reason Paul says not to grumble and dispute is because we "appear as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). To say that I think it is a logical stretch to teach that cosmetics are wrong because they make us sparkle and glow would be an understatement. (Come to think of it, I've never seen any cosmetics that make someone glow; I think it would be pretty cool.)

If we exclude the WPF's connection between cosmetics and artificial glowing then it becomes apparent that there are only two passages that are used to support the no-jewelry (or limited jewelry) rule: 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. I will deal with those two passages in a moment, but first let's look at some Scriptures that the holiness groups probably never showed you.

Some Scriptures Your Pastor Never Showed You:

Ezekiel 16:8-15, NASB

*Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine, declares the Lord God. Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. **I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you, declares the Lord God. But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing. ((New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995))***

Song of Solomon 1:10-11, NASB

“Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with strings of beads. We will make for you ornaments of gold With beads of silver.”

Pro 1:8-9 NASB

*Hear, my son, your father’s instruction And do not forsake your mother’s teaching; Indeed, **they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck.***

Son 7:1 NASB

*"How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! **The curves of your hips are like jewels,** The work of the hands of an artist.*

Isa 61:10 NASB

*I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For **He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,** As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Isa 49:18 NASB

*"Lift up your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. **As I live," declares the LORD,** "You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.*

Now, when I read these Scriptures I asked myself a question: If jewelry is so sinful, then how come God repeatedly used it as an analogy of beauty? If it's such a sin to wear jewelry then why would God promise to clothe people with "garments of salvation...as a bride adorns herself with jewels"? If jewelry's a sin then isn't God making some really, really bad analogies?

To put it another way, if jewelry is bad, then was God really saying, "I'm going to give my bride a bunch of jewels, and they'll make her look really beautiful, but she'd better not wear them because they're bad!" Or, "Wow, my bride rocks, the curve of her hips are like jewels! Too bad she can't wear jewels because it's a sin."

Isn't it a stretch to think that God would make these analogies if jewelry is bad?

Does the Bible Ever Say That Wearing

Jewelry Is A Sin?

This is a really important question. You see, everything that is a sin in the New Testament was also a sin in the Old Testament Law (I.E. Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy). Let me say that again: *Everything that is a sin in the New Testament was also a sin in the Old Testament Law.*

Now, the converse is not true. Everything that was a sin in the Old Testament Law was *not* necessarily a sin in the New Testament. The reason is because the Mosaic Law was broken into three parts: Moral, Ceremonial, and Penal. The moral law was (for the most part) what we call the 10 Commandments, as well as commands against fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness, and so on; the ceremonial law involved the sacrifices, the foods that a person could eat, whether or not you could dig your donkey out of a ditch on the Sabbath, and things like that; the penal law gave the penalties for breaking the moral or ceremonial law. ((International Standard Bible Encyclopedia , James Orr, M.A., D.D., General Editor, "Law In the New Testament"))

When Jesus came on the scene He fulfilled the ceremonial law and the penal law. He did *not* fulfill the moral law. ((Ibid.)) Instead, He "put [His] laws upon [our] heart[s]" (Heb. 10:16 NASB).

I said all of that to say this: You cannot find a sin in the New Testament that was not also a sin in the Old Testament Law. The reason is simple—the Law defines sin! Paul put it this way: "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet" (Rom. 7:7 NASB).

Now let's get back to my original question: Does the Bible ever say that wearing jewelry is a sin? The answer is apparently "No." The Bible never says that jewelry is a sin. For that matter, it has more good to say about jewelry than it

does bad!

So What Does The Bible Say?

As I showed at the start of this article, the no jewelry (or limited jewelry) doctrine is defended by two Scripture passages: 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. Before we look at those passages, though, please allow me to make one brief point. If I thought that the Bible even hinted that jewelry is a sin then I would be one of the doctrine's strongest defenders. When I was in the apostolic movement I never had any desire to wear jewelry; I never cared one way or the other. So please do not think that this article is about me wanting to wear jewelry, or me "rebellious," or anything like that. Because it's not.

With that said, let's look at 1 Tim. 2:8-10 and 1 Pet. 3:1-5. Let's do 1 Pet. 3:1-5 first.

1Pe 3:1-5 NASB

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.

Now, when presented with a passage such as this, we have two options. The first option is to assume that the author is presenting a principle, and that the examples that he uses to illustrate the principles are just that: examples. The second option is to assume that the author is laying down a set of

rules, and that he expects people to take him literally. The one thing that is *not* an option is to take part of the passage literally and part of it figuratively—yet that is exactly what the UPC and other holiness organizations frequently do.

For example, if Peter expects us to take him literally then we need to do just that. If he is speaking literally, and he is laying down rules, then here is what we can glean:

1. Peter is speaking only to wives. The things that he is saying do not apply to single women.
2. Wives cannot braid their hair.
3. Wives cannot wear **gold** jewelry (other kinds are presumably allowed).
4. Wives must not wear dresses.

That is option one.

Option two is that Peter is using fancy hair styles, gold jewelry, and fancy clothes as examples because they help him make his point. If option two is correct then we can glean these principles:

1. Peter is speaking specifically to wives—especially those who have unsaved husbands—but the principle can apply to us all.
2. His principle is that we should not focus on our outer appearance—on our lavish hairdos, fancy clothes, and expensive jewelry—but we should instead focus on cultivating “chaste and respectful behavior.”

I will let you decide which of those two options is correct. All that I will say is that one of them *has* to be correct. I want to stress again that it is illogical and absurd to read this passage and pull one word out—jewelry—and teach that it is wrong while maintaining that braided hair and dresses are alright.

Now let’s look at 1 Tim. 2:8-10:

1Ti 2:8-10 NASB

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.

We are once again presented with two options. Is Paul using braided hair, gold, pearls and costly garments as examples in order to make a broader point, or is he laying down a set of rules?

If he is laying down a set of rules then this is what we can glean:

1. Men always have to lift their hands when they pray. Furthermore, they cannot lift their hands if there is any wrath or dissension in their heart.
2. Women must dress modestly and discreetly.
3. Women must not braid their hair.
4. Women must not wear gold or pearls.
5. Women must not wear costly garments.
6. Women must wear good works (what store do you buy those in?).

There are a couple of problems with the first option. One might reasonably wonder how a woman can wear good works. On the other hand, if Paul is making a broader point, and he is just using braided hair, gold, pearls and costly garments as an example, then this is what we can glean:

1. Men need to cultivate a holy attitude. When they pray they should examine their hearts and make sure that they are not harboring any wrath or dissension.
2. Women need to do the same thing. They need to make sure that they are focusing on the inside and not the outside. They need to dress modestly and discreetly. If

they are poor then they need to not worry about not having gold and pearls and servants to give them fancy hairdos, and they should be content that they can dress modestly. If they are rich then they should not focus on their gold and pearls and fancy hairdos—they might even want to consider getting rid of some of that and helping folks out who are in need. That's good works, and that's what a godly woman should be worried about.

Now you might disagree with my broader interpretation of what Paul is saying to women, and that's fine if you do. But my original point remains the same. Either Paul is speaking literally or he is making a broader point using examples that were common for his day. It's one or the other, it can't be both at the same time. It makes no sense to say, "Paul said don't wear gold or pearls but it's OK if we braid our hair!" That makes no sense at all.

Conclusion

Do you see how ridiculous this gets? The UPC and associated organizations allow women to braid their hair, but they don't allow them to wear most jewelry. They allow women to wear "costly dresses," even though Peter said they shouldn't wear dresses at all (if we take him literally). Most of them allow women to wear gold wedding bands, almost all of them allow gold watches, and every single one allows gold-rimmed glasses, but they won't let them wear a silver necklace (even though neither Peter or Paul said anything about silver).

Folks, I have a name for this sort of teaching: Hypocrisy. Apostolic Pentecostal organizations have no problem taking Scriptures figuratively when it fits their agenda. They have no problem saying that when Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God he was speaking figuratively. They have no problem saying that Paul was giving a cultural command when he commanded (on four separate occasions) for brothers to greet each other with a holy kiss. They have no problem saying that

women can talk in church even though Paul specifically commanded against it.

And you know what? I agree with the UPC's interpretation of those passages. I do think that the command for brothers to kiss each other was entirely cultural. I do think that Paul's command for women not to speak in church was a command for order in the church, and the reason that he specifically commanded women not to speak was because of the cultural norms of his day. I do agree with the Oneness Pentecostals **and Trinitarians** when they say that God the Father does not have a physical body. Frankly, I don't know what Stephen saw, but the one thing that I do *not* think he saw was two Gods. Two Gods is both logically and Scripturally impossible, and the Trinitarians would agree with me on that.

Folks, God gave us a brain...let's use it! At some point we have to step back and look at a Scripture passage and capture the meaning as well as the words! If one steps back and just reads the passage with an open mind then it becomes clear that Peter and Paul were saying the exact same thing: Both men and women should be focused on cultivating inward holiness and not outward beauty! We should dress modestly and discreetly and avoid gaudiness and extravagance so that people can see our good deeds and our good behavior.

Conclusion:

If you are an apostolic woman reading this article, and you feel that God has led you to not wear jewelry, then I want you to know that I am not ridiculing you at all. You have my respect. My problem is not with you, it is with a religious system that creates man-made rules and regulations and then demands that people follow them. My problem is with a religious system that adds to the offense of the Cross. My problem is with any denomination, organization, or church that creates barriers between the lost and God.

You have heard my opinion of the subject, but if you would like to read "the other side of the story" then you can do so at these two links:

- <http://www.upci.org/doctrine/scripturesModesty.asp> – This is the UPCI's official position on clothing, jewelry, and hair.
- <http://www.apostolic.edu/biblestudy/files/bwahprt3.htm> – This is a Bible study written by a Oneness Pentecostal minister. It is not an official paper from the UPC, but it does give a very good overview of the sort of teaching that goes on in holiness churches. (*By the way, I have [written a response to his Bible study.](#)*)

Additional Study:

Studying the subject of jewelry can be hard since different words were used (ornaments, ornamentation, pearls, etc.). If you would like to do your own study into the subject then here are a couple of links that I hope will be helpful!

- [ISBE](#) – This is a link to the ISBE (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) article on "Ornament."
- [Smith's Bible Dictionary](#) – A link to the "Ornaments, personal" article in Smith's Bible Dictionary.
- [NASB word search](#) – A link to the results of a search for the word "ornaments" in the NASB (New American Standard Bible).