

# What Does the Bible Say About “Better Safe Than Sorry”?

If you read the comments on this Web site then you'll see something like this written a lot:

*I don't know if it's really wrong to cut my hair or wear make-up or jewelry, but isn't it better to be safe than sorry? I would rather get to Heaven and find out that I didn't have to do those things then get there and find out that I did, and then spend eternity in hell. Can you imagine “missing it” just because I wanted to cut my hair or wear a pair of pants?*

When I was growing up I heard that argument more times than I can count. After I left I've read it repeatedly in the comments on this Web site. It's the fall back position of many apostolics when every other argument fails. If you can't back up your doctrine with Scripture then pull out the “better safe than sorry” argument! And I have to admit, it sounds pretty good.

Another variant goes like this (I've heard it used a lot by pastors):

*I know that some of the rules might not be necessary, but sin is like a cliff. You don't build the fence right up against the cliff, you build it a little ways back. That way if people step over it then they still won't fall over the cliff. ((If you think about it, this doesn't make a lot of sense. Sin is a matter of intent as much as it is an action. The idea is that a person can decide to sin and still not sin because they're accidentally not breaking enough rules. It just doesn't add up. That's like saying you can force a person to be saved by baptizing them. It's not biblical. If a person is making a choice to do something that they perceive*

*as sin then it is sin, even if the action itself is not wrong. By the same token, an action like baptism or giving to the poor is spiritually meaningless unless done freely for the right reasons.))*

Yet another variant goes like this:

*After everything Christ has done for you, you can't even give up pants, make-up, or jewelry? He gave His life for you and you won't even give up pants, make-up, or jewelry for Him.*

Once again, this one sounds good too.

But there are two fundamental problems with all of these arguments. First, the underlying factor with all of them is that our works can get us into Heaven. I believe with all my heart that there's nothing wrong with having facial hair, but if I get to Heaven and find out that I'm wrong then I know God's grace covers me. The same goes for my wife cutting her hair or wearing jewelry and make-up. I don't believe there's a thing in the world wrong with it, but if I'm wrong then she's covered by grace. That doesn't give me an excuse to sin, it just means that after much study I firmly believe that I'm not sinning in the first place. ((This point cannot be stressed enough. A common apostolic counter-argument is that "easy believism" leads to sin. I deal with this briefly farther down in this article and in much more detail in the ["What Does the Bible Say About Salvation?"](#) article, Still, it's worth mentioning briefly here. Paul was accused of teaching the same thing—that grace leads to free sin. He strongly condemned that doctrine in Romans 6. The doctrine has been refuted repeatedly throughout the New Testament and church history. The word that is used to describe it is "antinomianism", which means "lawlessness." The Bible stresses that grace does not lead to lawlessness. Instead, grace leads to a changed nature through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. The idea here is that we do need to study and make every effort to align ourselves with

the commands of God, but when we “miss it” we can still be assured that God’s grace covers us. For more on antinomianism I recommend [this excellent article](#).) I’m doing my best to obey the commands of Christ, but I’m doing that *because* I’m saved, not *in order to get* saved. If I “miss it” then God’s grace covers me.

That’s one problem with the arguments. The idea that we can work our way into Heaven is just plain wrong. It stands in opposition to dozens of Scriptures. My article “[What does the Bible say about salvation?](#)” explains this in detail.

But there’s another problem with the “better safe than sorry” arguments, and it’s one that’s very counter intuitive. As a matter of fact, it’s like a bomb shell to a lot of people. It rocks their world. I know that it rocked mine. And that goes for non-apostolics too, by the way. Lots of people don’t know about this, but it’s central to the Biblical understanding of grace. Are you ready for it? Here goes:

*Works, for the sake of works, don't draw us closer to God; they **separate us from Him.***

Don’t believe me? Sound too radical? Well, before you shut me down, read this quote from a famous non-denominational theologian.

*I suspect you would never intend this, but this is what happens. When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace. Meanwhile we expectantly wait for a satisfying relationship with the Spirit. For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.*

I have to admit, that sounds pretty lovey dovey. As a matter of fact, when I was in the UPC I would have rolled my eyes at

that and said something like, "So you're just saying we should throw doctrine out the window and love everybody?"

If I said that then I would be wrong, though. Why? Because the famous theologian who wrote those words was the Apostle Paul. ((The quote above is Gal. 5:4-6 MSG)).

Here is how the NASB puts it:

*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.** For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. **You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.** A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. **But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.** I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."  
(Gal 5:1-14 NASB, emphasis mine)*

One word: Wow.

As a man I can't think of anything that would require more

dedication than adult circumcision. Surely God must be pleased with it, right? I can imagine the Galatians saying, "After everything that Christ did for you, you can't even be circumcised? He's done so much for you and yet you won't do that little thing for Him?" Or perhaps, "Circumcision might not be necessary, but isn't it better to be safe than sorry? Do you want to get to heaven and find out that the one thing God wanted you to do was circumcision and you missed Heaven because of it?"

It sounds good, doesn't it? God did a lot for us so we must do a lot for Him. The problem is that when we think like that we're thinking like humans and not like God. You see, circumcision was part of the Old Covenant. It was the Acts 2:38 of the Mosaic law. If you weren't circumcised then it didn't matter what else you did, you weren't under the Covenant. Some of the Jews in Galatia began to focus on the doctrine of circumcision because it had been so important under the Old Covenant. Somewhere along the way they began to believe that Christians under the New Covenant needed to be circumcised. They began to think that circumcision would draw them closer to God. They began to persuade themselves that they could work their way to Him. It's a very human way of thinking and it seems awfully right. "God did stuff for me so now I need to do stuff for Him," is what we think. The problem is, God doesn't see it that way. He doesn't see it as us doing stuff for Him, He sees it as us trying to work our way to Him and in the process making His grace meaningless.

Paul said something similar when people put the focus on baptism instead of the gospel—something that the apostolic churches are also guilty of. When that happened, Paul wrote:

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1Cor. 1:17-18 NASB)*

In this case baptism isn't wrong. As a matter of fact, Christ commanded it! By the same token, circumcision isn't wrong. Neither is wearing skirts or not cutting your hair. There's nothing inherently wrong about those things. Unless, that is, we persuade ourselves that doing or not doing those things somehow draws us closer to God. ((Baptism is indeed commanded by God so do not take this statement to mean that we should not get baptized. The key point here is that *anything* can become wrong, even baptism, if we do it in an attempt to work our way to salvation.)) When we allow ourselves to think that our works save us then we have made the cross ineffective—we've rendered it void. Why? Because we've told Christ that His work wasn't good enough. We've told Him that grace isn't enough, that we need to supplement it with a dress code. We've told Him that His death is meaningless.

You know what's ironic? That the apostolic churches put so much emphasis on not *falling* away from Christ that they actually *sever* themselves from Christ. They take a God who would never reject them and they use the knife of legalism to reject Him from themselves

Heavy stuff? Controversial? Counter intuitive? Don't blame me. I didn't write it. Blame Paul.

Another thing that's ironic is that the apostolic churches claim to have "the Truth." They like to go to Galatians 1:8-9 and say that they are teaching the *true* gospel and that everyone who disagrees is deceived and cursed. The sad thing is that the "other gospel" Paul was talking about was the doctrine that says we can work our way to God. That was the "other gospel," and the UPC teaches it.

And Paul said that anyone who taught it was cursed.

I realized these things when I was still in the UPC and it rocked my world. I realized that I was the one who believed the "other gospel," that I was the one with "little faith"

(Romans 14), that my works didn't indicate closeness to God, that instead they indicated I had little faith and wasn't close to Him at all.

So do I believe in the "better safe than sorry" philosophy? Nope. I don't. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:17 that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (NASB). Jesus said in John 15:1-17 that when we are in Him we grow spiritual fruit, and in Mat. 7:15-20 He said that the spiritual fruit is the evidence that we're saved. (Paul defined what that fruit is in Gal. 5:19-23, and it has nothing to do with the holiness standards; Jesus also gave examples of the good works we're called to do in Mat. 25:31-46).

In other words, when we are saved we are transformed—regenerated, as the Bible calls it. We become a new person. The Spirit of God begins to work in us to shape and mold us into His image. We begin to bear spiritual fruit. We don't grow closer to God by working for Him, we draw closer to Him by letting Him work in us. ((One thing worth mentioning is that there is a place in the Bible for good works. As a matter of fact, that concept is very important Scripturally. What we need to understand, though, is that we're saved **for** good works, not **because of** good works. Paul makes that abundantly clear in Eph. 2:1-10. Good works are, well, good! That is, until we begin to believe that they save us. It's also worth noting that a dress code isn't the kind of good works that Paul was talking about. We shouldn't use good works as an excuse for legalism. The good works that Paul was writing about are the same ones emphasized by Christ in Mat. 25:31-46. You'll see a lot of good works in that passage and none of them have anything to do with whether or not we wear make-up or cut our hair.))

You see, it's not my job to setup a system of rules to try to get into Heaven, it's the Holy Spirit's job to work in me and guide me down the proper paths. It's not my job to build a

fence of works and hope others don't cross it, it's God's job to work in those individuals and show them where the fence is. That doesn't negate the need for elders and ministers to teach the Word of God, it just means that it's not the job of those elders and ministers to create extra rules that aren't in Scripture in order to try to make our souls safe. When they do those things they place themselves under a curse from God, and when we follow them we pull out the knife of works and begin to slowly sever ourselves from Christ.

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## 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 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.

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## 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. 1:23<sup>1</sup>) and that He was born of the Virgin Mary (Mat. 1:23<sup>1</sup>). 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. 6:4<sup>2</sup>) 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. 1:3-7<sup>3</sup>).

I believe that Jesus was the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1-2, 14<sup>4</sup>). 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. 15:3-4<sup>5</sup>). I believe that Jesus rose bodily from the dead, just like He said He would in John 2:18-21<sup>6</sup>.

## **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 1:10-13<sup>8</sup>). Paul wrote that no person would be justified by the works of the Law (Rom. 3:20<sup>9</sup>). He went on to say that a person is justified as a gift by the grace of God (Rom. 3:24<sup>9</sup>), and that the justification comes by faith, not by works of the Law (Rom. 3:28<sup>9</sup>). He said that since we have “been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1<sup>10</sup>), and that since we are “justified by Christ’s blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom. 5:9<sup>11</sup>).

Paul made it abundantly clear that a person is justified by faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16<sup>12</sup>). Interestingly enough, He also made it clear that it is only faith, and nothing else, that justifies us (Rom. 3:28<sup>9</sup>; Gal. 2:16<sup>12</sup>). 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. 5:15<sup>13</sup>). 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. 5:17<sup>13</sup>). This means that sin does not have dominion over those who are saved (Rom. 6:11-15<sup>14</sup>). 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 2:1-2<sup>15</sup>).

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 1:4<sup>16</sup>). 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. 7:16-20<sup>17</sup>). 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. 5:19-21<sup>18</sup>). 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. 5:22-23<sup>18</sup>). 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 2:3-6<sup>19</sup>).

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 4:1<sup>20</sup>). 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 15:4-5<sup>21</sup>).

## **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 15:4<sup>21</sup>; [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" (4<sup>22</sup>), and then skip down to verse 17<sup>23</sup> 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*

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#### 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

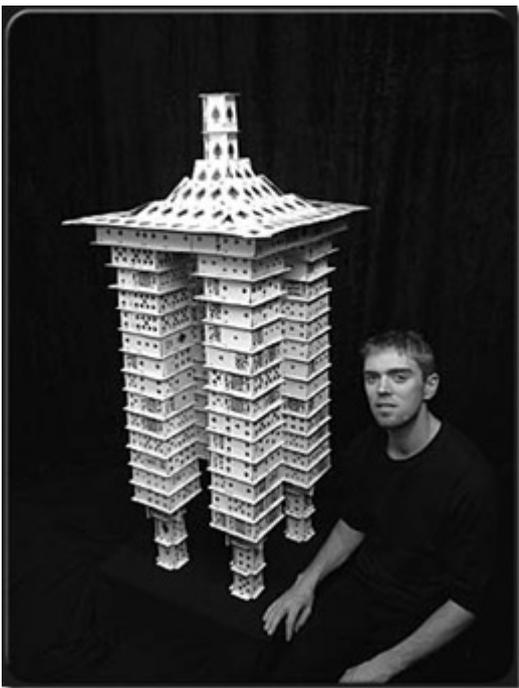
(17) for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

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## When is Truth no longer true?

Have you ever seen a house built out of cards? They're amazing! I did a Google search to try to find a picture of one, and I found the Web site of the guy who holds the world record in building card houses. His record? Over 25 feet high. The thing is, I think the UPC's record beats his by a few hundred feet. Why? Because the UPC's theology is nothing more than a house built out of cards.

I mean, look at this picture:



You've got to admit that this guy is nothing short of amazing (check out his [Web site](#) for more pictures).

But now I want you to imagine something. Imagine that Felix the wonder kitten comes into the room and decides to scratch his back on the card house. Imagine that wonder kitty knocks out one of the four columns that the house stands on. What do you think would happen?

Well, from the look of the picture, the whole thing would collapse. But let's say it doesn't. Let's say that it still manages to stand...except now it's *really* tilted and unstable.

A few minutes pass, and then Felix the wonder kitten decides to sharpen his claws on the table that the house of cards is standing on. Now he takes out column number 2! And what happens? Well...Felix the wonder cat has just now used up one of his nine lives because he just got crushed by a massive amount of cards.

See, that's the problem with a house of cards. It's inherently unstable. It looks really, really nice, but if a strong wind (or an inquisitive cat) comes along and knocks just a few of the cards out then it's no longer a house of cards. It's then a *pile* of cards!

And that's the problem with the UPC belief system. I am convinced that it is nothing more than a house of cards.

Here's what I mean: The UPC has a fairly unique idea of truth. They believe that they alone possess truth, and that everyone else is wrong. The reason that this is unique is because most Christian denominations are more than willing to admit that they could be wrong about something. That's why most denominations have a statement of faith that covers the things that they think are *really* important (usually things such as the virgin birth, the physical death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the inerrancy of Scripture, etc.), but then they recognize that there are plenty of other things that the Bible just doesn't make clear.

Well, the UPC doesn't take that stance. The UPC believes that it's right, and that's that. There's very, very little room for debate. The UPC's mentality works like this:

- *We have truth*
- *Therefore we are right*

If anyone questions *why* they have truth then they claim it's because they have the Holy Ghost. Of course, what they really mean is that they speak in tongues, but that's a separate issue.

Anyway, here's the point: The UPC has built a house of cards. They have told their people that they are completely, 100%, totally right about everything. No room for doubting, no room for error, the UPC is right.

But then...what happens when the UPC is wrong?

Take make-up for instance. I am firmly convinced that a person simply *cannot* make a Biblical case for make-up being a sin. You just can't do it. Why? Because it's not in the Bible! There are three Scriptures—three!—that even *mention* make-up, and they don't have anything bad to say about it! Yet the UPC claims that it is wrong for a woman to wear make-up.

And what about pants? More and more UPCers are admitting to me that they see nothing wrong with a woman wearing pants. But here's the problem: *The reason that they continue to refuse to wear pants is because they say that they "have the Truth"!*

The same goes for make-up, jewelry, and a host of other issues that more and more UPCers are seeing are not based on sound Biblical exegesis [interpretation].

Think about that for a moment.

So where am I going with all of this? Well, I'll tell ya' :)

What's happening is that more and more cards are being pulled out of the UPC's theological house. Beliefs about make-up are going, jewelry is going, TVs are long gone, pants are mostly gone (show me a UPC woman who doesn't wear pajama pants and I'll show you a rare UPC woman). But yet many people in the UPC are still convinced that Jesus' Name baptism and speaking in tongues are necessary for salvation, so they continue to

adhere to things that they no longer believe. Why? Because they are convinced that they “have the Truth.”

So my question to them is this: *When is Truth no longer true?*

In other words, how many cards do we have to pull out before we realize that our house of cards is no longer a house? How many beliefs do we have to recognize are wrong before we recognize that there’s something wrong with the whole system?

It was the realization that the UPC’s belief system is a house of cards that was one of the main factors in my decision to leave. At some point in 2006 I realized that there was no way the UPC could have a “special revelation” from God and still hold to so many biblically unfounded beliefs.

I simply realized that Truth has to be true. If the UPC “has Truth” or is “in the Truth” then what it teaches will be, well, true! On the other hand, if even one of the UPC’s cardinal teachings is found to be incorrect then that brings the whole system under fire. It doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s all wrong, but it does mean that a person should seriously examine it to find out what else is wrong with system.



I think that many people have already recognized that certain UPC doctrines are wrong. I encourage those people to examine the rest of what the UPC teaches to find out whether or not

it's correct. After all, it's God's Word that will judge us, not a denomination's statement of faith.

Finally, I had two different UPC friends make this statement to me when we were talking about fallacies in the UPC's beliefs: "Don't throw out the baby with the bath water." They both admitted that there were many things that the UPC teaches that they don't believe, but they still believe the "main doctrines" (I.e., tongues, baptism, and hair for these two people), so they warned me to "not throw out the baby with the bath water."

Here was my response to them: *"There is no baby!"*

Too many cards are gone. The house has collapsed. I am convinced that the UPC doesn't have a leg to stand on. Therefore, when I left I didn't throw out the baby with the bath water...I just walked away from a pile of cards that collapsed a long time ago.



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## 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).