

## Is It “From Heaven, or of Man?”

On one occasion “*the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto*” Jesus, asking “*by what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority.*” Jesus replied to their question by asking one Himself. He said: “*The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?*” Matt. 21:24-25.

Without elaborating upon the context of these Scriptures, we simply state that these passages necessarily infer that, in religious affairs, some things are “*from heaven*,” and other things are “*of men*.” It should be obvious that anything which is “*of men*” and **not** “*from heaven*” certainly will not lead **to** heaven. Let us therefore notice some current religious teaching and (or) practices and examine them from this standpoint.

1. The practice of Infant Baptism — which is it; is “*from heaven, or of men?*” There is no record of Jesus advocating infant baptism. There is no record of any of the apostles ever baptizing infants, or encouraging such. Furthermore, **faith**, which must precede scriptural baptism (Mark 16:16) can not be present in tiny infants. Hence, infant baptism, “*is it from heaven, or of men?*”

2. The Use of Mechanical Instruments of Music in Worship in this the gospel age. Which is it, “*from heaven, or of men?*” The Scriptures specify **vocal** music (see I Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15, etc.) Mechanical instruments of music in worship were introduced by the apostate church centuries after the completion of the New Testament. So which is it, “*from heaven, or of men?*”

3. The teaching that baptism has nothing to do with salvation — especially in view of I Peter 3:21 wherein the inspired apostle Peter said, “*the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...*,” and Acts 2:38 wherein he commanded the pricked-in-the-heart Jews to “*repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*” Hence, in view of these verses we ask what about the teaching that baptism is not essential for salvation — which is it, “*is it from heaven, or of men?*”

4. The teaching that Peter was the first pope, especially in view of the fact that the Bible declares that he was married (Matt. 8:14), that he was rebuked by Paul (Gal. 2:11-14), that he counted himself unworthy of the worship of other men (Act 10:25,26), but it does not say one word about Peter ever being in Rome! Regarding this teaching, which is it, “*from heaven, or of men?*”

5. The statement that “one church is as another,” and the teaching that “no church is essential for salvation.” How does this teaching harmonize with the Bible wherein we read that Jesus built the church, Matt. 16:18, that the church is “*his body*,” Eph. 1:22-23, that there is “*one body*,” Eph. 4:4, that Jesus is the “*savior of the body*,” Eph. 5:23, and that in His body “*both*” Jesus and Gentiles are reconciled “*unto God*,” Eph. 2:16? Is such teaching “*from heaven, or of men?*”

6. The current practice of calling men “Father,” which Jesus condemned (Matt. 23:7-10),

or “Reverend,” which is a name belonging to God and not to man (Psalm 119:9). Is it “*from heaven, or of men?*”

7. The popular statement that “there is nothing in a name,” when Peter referred to the name of Christ, saying “*neither is there salvation in any other **name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved?*” Is the teaching inferred by such a statement “*from heaven, or of men?*”

8. The idea that we are saved by faith only, when the inspired James said a man is justified “***not** by faith only,*” James 2:24. Is it “*from heaven, or of men?*”

9. The position maintained by many that the elders of a local church can assume the oversight of a work of brotherhood proportions, when God bound their oversight to the “*flock of God..among*” them (I Peter 5:3; Acts 20:28). Is it “*from heaven, or of men?*”

10. The building of human institutions (whether benevolent, edification, or missionary), to be financially subsidized by the church, so that these man-made institutions can do the work God commanded **the church** to do. (Acts 6:1-6; 11:27-30; Eph. 4:11-16; I Thess. 1:8; I Tim. 3:15. Is it “*from heaven, or of men?*”

Kind reader, anything “*of men*” in religious matters, and not “*from heaven,*” will not lead **to** heaven! We must have Bible authority for all we teach and practice, always following that which is “*from heaven,*” and rejecting that which is “*of men.*” This is the only safe course.

\*\*\* Bobby Witherington

### **God Is Not A Spare Tire**

By David Maxson

When is the last time you used your spare tire? Personally, I can’t remember the last time I used mine. In fact, on my current vehicle (which I’ve had six years now) I’ve never used it. Yet I wouldn’t have bought my car without one.

How do you see God? Is He just an occasional part of your life? It is entirely possible to see God as like a spare tire: someone Who is really important (even essential) yet not used or even thought about on a daily basis.

Truth be told, for many of us God is only there for emergencies. He’s kind of like a contingency plan. We might need Him sometime, so it’s nice to have Him there. It’s nice to know we can pull Him out of the truck when we need Him. But once our life gets back in order we want to conveniently stow Him back where He belongs — in the trunk!

It doesn’t work that way with God! God is not a mere contingency plan, there for us to use whenever we need Him. If we do not make God a part of our regular lives (through Bible study, prayer, meditation, communion, service, etc.), then we cannot expect Him to be there for us when we feel like we need Him.

God is not a spare tire. He will not be treated that way. He will accept nothing less than first place in your life.

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### **Ingratitude**

On one occasion ten lepers met the Lord and besought Him saying, “*Jesus, Master, have*

*mercy on us.” Jesus healed all ten of them, “and **one** of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell on his face at his feet, giving him thanks...” Jesus answered, “were not **ten** cleansed? But where are the **nine**?” (Luke 17:12-17).*

Leprosy was a dreaded, loathsome disease, and incurable by human means. To be supernaturally healed of this disease and not return “*to give glory to God*” was indicative of the basest kind of ingratitude. There is no way to excuse their action (or lack thereof). But are not many today equally as ungrateful? God gave His Son, and His Son gave His life that we might be saved from the leprosy of sin, but how many pause to give God glory and honor? Many a precious soul has obeyed the gospel and received “*the remission of sins*,” only to become unfaithful, having “*forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*,” (2 Pet. 1:19).

Five things happened in the case of the leper whom the Lord commended: (1) He besought the Lord, (2) The Lord healed him, (3) He glorified God, (4) He gave thanks, and (5) Jesus commended him.

If you are a Christian, you besought the Lord on His terms, and he healed your soul by remitting your sins. Is it not then your responsibility to glorify God and express by services rendered your gratitude to the Lord. Can your faith ever make “*thee whole*” apart from such an expression of faith, love, and gratitude?

“Must I worship?” “Is it necessary for me to attend every time?” “I can worship at home.” These, and many more, are statements and questions uttered by ungrateful souls who are represented by the nine that received the Lord’s blessing, but who returned not to give Him the glory. Friend, your worship and service to the Lord (whether little or much) is indicative of your love for God and your gratitude for the blessings He has bestowed upon you. May God deliver all of us from the sin of ingratitude!

\*\*\* —Bobby Witherington

**True:** “Self praise is no recommendation.”

“If we don’t crucify the love of the world, the love of the world will crucify us.”