

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

ANSWERING DENOMINATIONAL DOCTRINES “Methodist Church”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24). Welcome to our study of Answering Denominational Doctrines. In this series of lessons we have been upholding the Word of God as “all truth” (Ps. 119:160), and as God’s inspired revelation on all matters (2 Pet. 1:3). In view of that, we have been examining the doctrines and teachings of men and groups to see if what those men or groups say is in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament. In today’s lesson we are going to examine some of the doctrines of the Methodist religion to see if they are true to the teaching of the New Testament. Is what John Wesley and others taught what is taught in the New Testament? Can we be followers of Methodism or John Wesley and be right with God?

We first need to understand that the Methodist church is not the church about which we read in the New Testament. How do we know that? The Methodist Church began in the year 1739. The New Testament church started on the Day of Pentecost in the first century. In Daniel 2:44 the Scriptures prophesied and promised that during the “days of these kings” God would establish His eternal kingdom. There was the Babylonian Kingdom, the Medo-Persian Kingdom, the Greek Kingdom, and the Roman Empire. Only during the Roman period did God establish His kingdom (the church)—Matthew 16:18-19. The year 1739 is too late. Jesus already had established His church during the first century.

Where did the Methodist church begin? It started in England. That is not the place where God said His church would start. Isaiah 2:1-4 teaches that the law would “go forth from Jerusalem and from Mount Zion” when God established His kingdom. Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. According to Acts 2:47, those who obeyed the Gospel message were added to the Lord’s church in Jerusalem. The church began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following Christ’s resurrection, not in England in 1739.

Who founded the Methodist religion? Many say that John Wesley is the founder of this movement. In fact, concerning this, the United Methodist Church says, “May 24th, or the nearest Sunday, is Aldersgate Day or Aldersgate Sunday. This celebrates our founder John Wesley’s life-changing experience at a meeting on Aldersgate Street, May 24th, 1738.” There is no doubt about the fact that many claim that John Wesley is the founder of the Methodist religion. What is wrong with that? Jesus must be the founder of the New Testament church for it to be right with God. “No other foundation can any man lay, except that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Notice, too, what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18. Who is the founder of the church of which we read in the Bible? Jesus said, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Did Jesus claim that He would be the Founder and Builder of His church? Absolutely He did. The church must wear His name. He must be the Founder of it. And His Word must be the sole guide for the New Testament

church. The Methodist started in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong founder. If it does not meet the fundamental criteria set forth in Scripture, how can it be the church about which we read in the New Testament?

There are other errors concerning the Methodist religion, one of which is its belief concerning Bible authority. Here is what the *Methodist Book of Discipline* says of some of the initial founders:

“They were equally confident that there is a marrow of Christian truth that can be identified and that can be conserved. This living core stands revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. They were very much aware, of course, that God’s eternal Word never has been, nor can be, exhaustively expressed in any single form of words. They were also prepared as a matter of course to reaffirm the ancient creeds and confessions as valid summaries of Christian truth. But they were very careful not to invest them with final authority or set them apart as absolute standards for doctrinal truth or error.”

What does all of this mean? Scripture must be “vivified by reason, illumined by tradition, and confirmed by reason” before it can be true?! Listen to this statement: “They were very much aware, of course, that God’s eternal Word never has been, nor can be, exhaustively expressed in any single form of words.” Do we understand what is being said here?! God wrote the Bible in words—in a single form of words. Methodism says that we cannot get the whole truth that way. But the Bible **is** the whole truth, which has been revealed in words. Is it a fact that God revealed all truth in a single form of words known as the Bible? Notice the words of 2 Peter 1:3—“As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” Can we have that type of knowledge? Absolutely—because the Bible says that it is “all truth” (Jn. 17:17). It is the “perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25), and we can know how to please God and live the best life based on its teachings. It is really against the inspiration of Scripture to say that God never has, nor ever will, reveal everything in one book.” In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are told that “all scripture is giving by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Does the Bible claim to be “all truth,” everything we need, and able to make us complete? Absolutely. And it is written in words. In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul said, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” In Psalm 119:160 we are told that the entirety of God’s Word is truth. Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). In John 8:32 Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Do not buy into the idea that the Bible does not “have it all.” God says that it does. We do not need any creeds, “confessions of faith,” sermons of John Wesley, sermons of John Knox, or anyone else. Here is a great truth that I urge you to grasp today. We can take the Bible, and the Bible alone, read it, do what it says, and know for a fact that we are right with God so that we can go to Heaven. The Methodist Church teaches error concerning authority and the Bible.

The Methodists also have a *Book of Discipline* that gives the official rules and regulations of the church, along with its “Articles of Faith.” The *Methodist Book of Discipline* is a man-made book. Do we need a *Book of Discipline*, official rules and regulations of the church, and a manmade book on how we should live, act, worship, and teach? No. The Bible is to be our only guide regarding the rules by which we live and the beliefs that we hold. We must understand that the Bible is “God’s manual,” and is the only manual we need. Notice again 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and as you listen to God’s words, ask yourself if, based on these verses, we need other books of men: “All scripture is giving by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that

the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” If the Bible is God’s Word, and if it makes us complete, then we do not need anything else. Galatians 1:6-9 tells us that we are not to give in to any other gospel. The Bible contains the one-and-only Gospel. We must not add to it or take away from it (Rev. 22:18-19). We must continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42), not in the writings and teachings of mere men. The idea of having a so-called *Book of Discipline* that contains regulations, rules, and manmade ideas is wrong. All we need is the Bible. Isn’t it wonderful to know that we do not have to read anything, or follow anything, except the Bible in order to get to Heaven? Why would anyone want to do anything else? God has given us His inspired, perfect will in the Bible. We must stay true to it.

Another doctrine that Methodists often teach began with John Wesley and others around that time. Methodists believe, “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.” There may be some comfort brought to people, but it is a false comfort. The Bible explicitly says that we are **not** saved by faith only. Men say that we **are** saved by faith only. The one time that phrase occurs in Scripture is when God says exactly the opposite! Notice James 2:24—“You see then that a man is justified by works, **and not by faith only.**” Men say that we are saved by faith only. God uses that phrase only one time, and says that we are **not** saved by faith only! Jesus clearly taught this during His earthly ministry. In Luke 6:46 Jesus asked the Pharisees, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” We cannot simply say, “Lord, I believe in You,” but not do what He says. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Do you remember Hebrews 5:8-9? “Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey** Him.” This does not mention just “belief,” but “obedience.” Someone might say, “I see what you’re saying, but doesn’t that mean that our salvation is based on works?” Yes—but **not** works of merit! There are “conditional works” that every person must carry out if he is going to believe in God. Someone objects, “No! No works!” Let’s take that position to its logical conclusion. If a person says that an individual must have “no works whatsoever,” then he cannot even believe in God because belief is a conditional work. Look in John 6:28-29—“Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’” We must not say “No works!,” because if we say that, we cannot even believe in God. Everyone realizes that a person must believe. There are conditional works that represent things we must do (like believing, repenting confessing, and being baptized), yet that do not “earn us” our salvation. They are necessary because they represent conditions that God has set forth. But there is another type of works known as “meritorious works.” The Jews would say to Jesus, for example, “We are children of Abraham. We deserve to go to Heaven!” John said, “God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones! Do not say, ‘We are children of Abraham’” (Mt. 3:9). We must do more than “just believe.” The phrase “faith only” occurs only one time in Scripture, and that is where God says exactly the opposite of what the Methodist religion teaches. We must stay with God. “Let God be true, and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4).

The Methodist Church also teaches that we are born in sin. In Article 8 of their “Articles of Confession,” the Methodists state: “The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works to faith and call upon God.” We see several ideas in this. There is the idea that we are born in sin and have no control over what we do. We are called by the Holy Spirit, and we must respond. Again, this is contrary to the Word and will of God. We can choose to do right and go to Heaven, or we can choose to do wrong and be lost. We have the choice to make. No one makes us make a choice. No one forces us. Think about what Joshua said to the Israelites

when he was about to depart this life and wanted to encourage them to follow God's law. Joshua said in Joshua 24:15,

"If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We have the ability to choose whom we will serve. In Acts 3:19 we are told "repent and turn again." We make the choice to repent and turn again. No one forces us. No one pulls us against our will. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He does not show personal favoritism to any man (Gal. 2:6). In fact, God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). The idea that we are born sinners, are unconditionally elected, and are "chosen to salvation" without any choice on our part is not according to Scripture. Nor is it in accord with the nature of God. Think about it for a moment. If God wants all people to be saved, and if God shows personal favoritism to no person, yet some are elected to salvation and some are not, what does that say about God? It suggests that God chose certain people to go to Hell, and there is nothing they can do about it. That is not the God about Whom we read in the Bible. God wants all people to be saved. He said, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden" (Mt. 11:28-30).

Another doctrine that Methodists often teach has to do with the Methodist Church being a "community of all believers." Concerning this, the Methodist Church believes that "the Christian Church is the community of all believers under the lordship of Christ." That is, anyone anywhere who believes in Christ is under the umbrella of being a Christian, and everyone will be saved. That is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that Jesus built **one** church. I want to show this from Scripture, and break it down for you so that you can envision it. There are three principles I want you to see here.

First, the Bible teaches that the body and the church are one and the same. That is, when you see "church" or "body," they are synonyms for the same group. The body is the church. Let me show from Scripture that such is the case. In Ephesians 1:22-23 we read, "And He [God] put all things under His [Christ] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." What do we learn from this verse? The church is the body, and the body is the church.

Second, since the church is the body and the body is the church, how many bodies are there? Are there a thousand? Are there five hundred? Are there ten? Or is there one? Let's permit the Bible to answer the question. Notice Ephesians 4:4—"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling." The body is the church, and there is only one body. That leads us to our next point.

Third, if the body is the church, and if there is only one body, how many churches are there? Just one! Jesus said, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My **church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Notice the words of Colossians 3:15, and how emphatic they are: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in **one body**; and be thankful." Everyone who claims some type of belief in Jesus is **not** under the umbrella of Christianity, and is **not** a part of the community of Christ. A person cannot be in God's family without obeying the Gospel and without obeying the one church of which we read in the Bible.

One of the more controversial issues that has come to light, especially recently, is that the Methodist Church is now allowing more and more women to become "pastors" or "bishops" in their assemblies. In fact, the *Methodist Manual* says that women can preach, teach, and be "pastors" and "bishops." For example, on May 4, 1956, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the

General Conference of the Methodist Church approved full “clergy rights” for women. Half a century later, the fruits of that action have resulted in nearly “12,000 United Methodist clergy women who serve the Church at every level—from bishops to local pastors.” That is a direct quote from UMC.org (the home page of the Methodist Church). In 1956 this started. And now there are 12,000 women preachers and teachers in the Methodist Church. Is that right? Is that what God wants? Is that in accord with the Bible? Do we believe that the Methodist Church can be right if it teaches and practices such things? Let’s allow the Bible to answer such questions. Does God authorize in Scripture women to preach, teach, and be in authority over men? In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 we read, “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” Today it comes down to the fact that we either have to say that God did not mean what He said, or we are going to have to say that the Methodists are wrong. “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). Someone might say, “That was just Paul speaking, and he was a sexist. That had to do with another time and era.” But the context of Paul’s statement teaches that his statement was not a rule based on any particular day or society. Rather, it was a statement that went all the way back to Creation. God formed man first, and then woman. It was Eve who was deceived, not Adam. This shows that Paul’s statement goes all the way back to Creation. God set the man as the head in the home. God has placed the men in the church as its leaders. Women are to be submissive. That is a law based on Creation, not a custom or tradition. Rather, it is something that goes beyond time, and that remains true for all generations. Here’s what I would like you to think about. Can it be the case that the Methodist Church can be right with God, yet have women preachers—when God said, “I do not permit a women to teach or be in authority”? We cannot have it both ways. We will have to take the Bible and throw it out, or we will have to take the *Methodist Book of Discipline* and throw it out. We need to stick with the Bible.

One other area that I want to examine has to do with the fact that the Methodist Church uses mechanical instruments of music in its assemblies. The founder, John Wesley, did not even approve of such. Wesley wrote, “I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen.” What was he saying? “If you want to use it as a decorative piece, go ahead. But don’t dare play it because it’s not authorized.” The same is true today. The New Testament authorizes only singing as music in worship. If we today are under the law of Christ that is found in Matthew through Revelation, where do we read about Christians having pianos, organs, a big band, or a rock group on stage during worship? We do not find that in the New Testament. Here is what the Scripture says: “Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). What are we to do? Are we to speak, sing, and make melody on a piano or an organ? No! We are to make melody in our hearts to the Lord. How do we do that? In 1 Corinthians 14:15 we are told, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.” That is what is pleasing to God. Colossians 3:16-17 teaches the same thing. We are to speak to one another, sing to one another, and admonish and teach one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We are not to add to or take away from God’s Word. Someone might say, “You’re nitpicking because it’s not that big a deal.” Let’s ask Nadab and Abihu if making changes or additions to God’s law is a “big deal.” They offered “strange fire before God which He had not commanded,” and fire rained down from Heaven and devoured them that very moment. “Nadab and Abihu, is it a very big deal if you make small changes or any changes in worship to God?” They died that day because of the change that they made! We are not living under the Old Law. We do not worship today like they did. We are under the New Testament, which tells us to sing and to make melody in our hearts.

Another doctrine of the Methodist Church has to do with the Lord's Supper. Concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper, many Methodist congregations partake on the first Sunday of the month, or on Christmas and Easter. Where in the Bible do we learn that we are to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month? Where does the Bible say anything about Christmas to begin with, or about observing the Lord's Supper only on Christmas or Easter? Those things are not taught in the New Testament. In the New Testament, early Christian partook of the Lord's Supper **every** first day of the week. Acts 20:7 teaches us that they came together on the first day of the week "to break bread." Let's do what they did. They did not select a certain Sunday in the month. They did not choose Christmas or Easter (which are not religious holidays that we ought to be observing in the first place). Rather, first-century Christians met on the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper. Let me ask you this: Why is it the case that in every Methodist congregation you will find people giving every first day of the week, yet the Lord's Supper is observed only occasionally? The same passages authorize both. In 1 Corinthians 16: 1-2 we learn that we are to give on the first day of the week. In that context—because it has to do with money—people understand that they are to do it "every Sunday." The same language is found in Acts 20:7 where the Christians came together "on the first day of the week to break bread." Why can we understand one, but not the other? It shows the inconsistency in which people sometimes get involved.

I want to plead with you today: if you have gotten caught up in the errors of the Methodist Church, please come out of those errors. We are not out to make you angry or mad. We love your soul, and we want you to go to Heaven. Some of the things we have noted today represent clear contradictions with the Word of God that Methodists teach. People cannot have it both ways. Why not trust God? Take Him at His Word. Do what He says. Become a New Testament Christian. Come out of religious error, and follow the Bible and Bible alone. I can guarantee you that if you will make it your aim to do that, it will be impossible for you not to go to Heaven. Please do it today before it is too late.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE METHODIST CHURCH”

1. According to Psalm 119:160, what is “the entirety” of God’s Word?
2. What important prophecy is found in Daniel 2:44 in the Bible?
3. According to the prophecy contained in Isaiah 2:1-4, in what city would the kingdom of God begin?
4. According to Methodist teachings, in what city did the Methodist Church begin?
5. According to the Methodist religion, who is the founder of the Methodist Church?
6. According to the Bible (Mt. 16:18), who is the founder of the one true church?
7. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what had God given us in His Word?
8. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what is God’s Word?
9. What is the *Methodist Book of Discipline*, and is it acceptable according to the Word of God?
10. According to Methodist doctrine, people are saved “by faith only.” What does James 2:24 have to say about that?
11. What does John 6:28-29 have to say about “belief”?
12. Methodists teach that all individuals are born in sin. What did Jesus have to say about this in Matthew 19:14 (“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven”)?
13. The Methodist Church teaches that “the Christian Church is the community of all believers under the lordship of Christ.” What do passages such as Colossians 1:18, Colossians 3:15, Ephesians 1:22-23, and Ephesians 4:4 have to say about that?
14. Methodists believe that women may serve in preaching and teaching capacities in the church. What does 1 Timothy 2:11-12 have to say about such a practice?
15. Methodists believe that mechanical instruments of music may be used in worship of God. Where in the New Testament is such a practice authorized?
16. Methodists believe that mechanical instruments of music may be used in worship of God. What do passages such as Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 have to say about that?
17. Methodists teach and practice that the Lord’s Supper may be observed at time such as the first Sunday of every month, on Christmas, on Easter, etc. According to the teaching of the New Testament, on what day did first-century Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper (and thus, on what day are we today to partake of the Lord’s Supper)?