

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **ANSWERING DENOMINATIONAL DOCTRINES “The Episcopal Church”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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

“There are many members, yet one body” (1 Cor. 12:20). Welcome to our study on answering denominational doctrines. Our desire in this series is to look at the various backgrounds and teachings of religious groups that exist today in order to examine them based on the Scriptures. Are any of those groups the church about which we read in the New Testament? Do their doctrines conform to the teachings and doctrines of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

In today’s lesson we will be examining the doctrines of the Episcopal denomination. The first question we might ask is, “When did this religious group start?” History tells us that it began in the year 1532. Is that the right time for the Lord’s church to have begun? Not at all. Scripture tells us that the church started fifteen hundred years before this denomination’s beginning. Look at the words of Daniel 2:44—“In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” This is a prophecy about God’s eternal kingdom, which Jesus identified as the church (Mt. 16:18-19). When was the kingdom going to be established? It was not during the Babylonian era, which was one of the kingdoms that followed Daniel’s prophecy. It was not during the Medo-Persian era. It was not during the time of Alexander the Great. Then we arrive at the Roman era when Jesus arrives on the scene and makes the promise in Mark 9:1, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” When did the kingdom of God (the New Testament church) begin? It started in the first century on the Day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2. What is wrong with the Episcopal denomination? It cannot be the church about which we read in the New Testament because its beginning is more than fifteen hundred years too late. It is impossible that it can be the church that Jesus started in the first century.

The next practical question is, “Where did the Episcopal Church originate?” History tells us that it began in England. There was a rivalry between the pope and the king of England. And when two people fought for power, out of that fight came the Episcopal movement. Is England the correct place for the church to have started? Was the church prophesied to begin in England? Not at all. According to Isaiah 2 the house of the Lord (the temple of God) was going to go forth from Jerusalem. Look at Acts 2:47—“They were praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” It was in Jerusalem where the church of the Lord began. It did not start in England or America. It started in Jerusalem. Thus, if a religious group did not have its beginning at the right time and in the right place, then it cannot be the church about which we read in the New Testament.

The next logical question is, “Who founded the Episcopal Church?” Again, history tells us that Henry VIII started the Episcopal Church to overrule the pope so that he could live in an adulterous relationship with Ann Boleyn, which the pope would not allow. Henry VIII

had a girl friend who, according to the pope, could not become his wife. So the king said, "I'll take the power and do what I want!" Out of that, the Episcopal movement arose. The Episcopal religion is actually Catholicism without the pope. The king wanted to marry Ann Boleyn, so he started the Episcopal Church. Was Henry VIII authorized by the Lord to start his own religious group? Not at all. According to the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the sole Founder of the church. Jesus Himself said, "I will build **My** church..." (Mt. 16:18). The New Testament does not say that Henry VIII would establish the Episcopal Church. Rather, it says that Jesus would build **His** church. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 the Bible says, "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Jesus is the Founder and the Foundation of the church. If Jesus did not start the church of which you are a member, then that church is not the church about which you read in the New Testament. It also cannot be the place where salvation is found, and it is not the group that one day will be taken back to the Father in Heaven (1 Cor. 15:24).

Who is the head of the Episcopal Church? History and the church's own writings tell us that the British monarch is the head of the church. At present, Queen Elizabeth II holds the constitutional title. In practice, however, the administrative leadership of the church falls to the Archbishop of Canterbury. "The worldwide Anglican Communion of independent national or regional churches recognizes the Archbishop of Canterbury as a kind of 'symbolic' leader. The Most Reverend and Right Honorable Dr. Rowan Williams has served as Archbishop of Canterbury since 2002." Stop and think about that. You have a British monarch, a group of Anglican communities, and an Archbishop of Canterbury. But where does all of that fit with the teaching of the New Testament? Is that how God set up the church? Is that who God placed as head? Is the king of England the head of the church? No. Jesus is still the Head of the church today. This is one of the major problems with denominationalism. Who has the power, and who is going to be in charge? Jesus is the only One Who has such power, and Who has the right to be in charge. Ephesians 1:22-23 states, "And He [God] put all things under His [Jesus'] 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." Who is the Head of the church? Jesus is! He is still alive. He arose from the dead and is reigning at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 1:4). And it is His Word that is to lead and guide us today. We do not need an earthly figurehead to serve as head of the church. Our heavenly Father has set in place Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the Head of the Church. And we must allow only Him to be the Head of the church.

What, then, is the authority for the Episcopal Church? If the Episcopal Church was not started in the right place, and if it does not have the correct person as its head, then where does it get its authority? I recently spoke with an Episcopal "priest" who informed me about the church's three sources of authority. Here are his exact words. "In the Episcopal Church, there are three sources of authority: Scripture, reason, and tradition. And none of these outweighs the other." Think about that for a moment. Scripture is authoritative, but it is not any more important than reason or tradition. What is "reason"? It is our best logical thinking. It is the best ideas that we human possess. If you thought that Scripture ought to come first, think again because according to the Episcopal way of thinking, reason is equivalent to Scripture. What is tradition? Tradition is "what we've always done." Is that the hierarchy that God established? Not at all! God set His Word as the final authority. And reason and tradition are not equivalent to God's Word. In 2 Peter 1:3 we are told, "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." God gave us in the Bible (not in reason or tradition) all things that we need for life and godliness. This explains why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:6 that we are not to "go beyond what is written." This is why Revelation 22:18-19 says that we are not to add to or take away from the Word of God. Proverbs 30:6 says, "Do

not add to His Word, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar.” Neither the pope, nor the king of England, nor an archbishop can ever be the authority for what we do. If we cannot justify by the Bible what we do, then we do not need to do such things. The Episcopal Church has too many sources of authority.

Now let’s compare certain Episcopal doctrines to Bible doctrines. The Episcopal Church teaches that human creeds should be received and believed by its members. Concerning this belief, Article VIII of the Thirty Nine Articles of Belief states, “The Nicene Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles’ Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.” Also, the Episcopal Church has a *Common Book of Prayer* that tells a person what to say, when to say it, and how to say it in worship to God. What place should such things as the Nicene Creed, the Apostles’ Creed, or a *Common Book of Prayer* play in a Christian’s life and worship today? Let’s go to the Bible for the answer. The Bible teaches that it alone is the book that we are to follow in matters of salvation and worship. The Bible is the only book that has come from God. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are told that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” In 2 Peter 1:3 we are told that the Bible contains “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” Holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write down what they wrote. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:6, “I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written.” If we cannot find it in the Bible, then we must not do it. We cannot go beyond what is said in the pages of the Bible. Notice again Revelation 22:18-19—

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

God tells us that we cannot add to or take away from the Bible. We must stay within its boundaries. How serious is that? We are told in 2 John 9, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” What happens when we interject human tradition? The Episcopal Church says that reason and tradition are as much an authority as the Bible. What did Jesus say? In Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus said, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” When tradition becomes equivalent to doctrine, then our worship to God is vain, and we are not right in His sight.

In the Episcopal Church, one bishop rules over a congregation or a diocese. Is that God’s hierarchy of authority? Did God set up one bishop to rule over an entire congregation or a diocese? Remember that Jesus is the Head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23). The Bible teaches that God put in place in the New Testament elders (bishops) and deacons. The following names are used in the New Testament to describe elders. In Acts 20:17,28 the word “overseers” is used. In Philippians 1 we find the word “bishops” used. In 1 Peter 5 we see the word “elders” used. All three of these words represent the office of an elder (or bishop or overseer). It is significant that there is always a plurality of elders found in the New Testament as guiding a local congregation. These elders have authority in matters of expediency and functionality. Notice Acts 14:23—“When they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a pope, or absolute power residing in an earthly king. Diotrophes tried that—and Paul rebuked him sharply (2 John 7-

11). We can see throughout the New Testament that there is always a plurality of elders in churches, and that congregations are autonomous. We do not find in the New Testament the hierarchy of authority that is found in the Episcopal Church.

Episcopal doctrine also says that a man cannot turn and save himself. Man, in essence, has no free will apart from God's grace. Concerning this, the Thirty Nine Articles of Faith says, "The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God." This means that if God does not do it for us, then we cannot do anything to ensure that we are saved. There is nothing a person can or has to do; God must do it all. But the Bible teaches that man is a free moral agent, and that he can and must call on God out of his own free will. The Episcopal Church's teaching is the exact opposite of what is found in Scripture. Look 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."

Notice the contrast. Episcopal doctrine says that a person cannot choose to do anything because God has to do everything for him. But the Bible says that a person can choose for himself or herself. Acts 10:34 tells us God is not a God of partiality. Galatians 2:6 tells us that God shows no partiality, but will accept all those who do His will. God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Have you thought about the logical conclusion of Episcopal doctrine on this matter? If a person cannot do anything to ensure his salvation, and God chooses to allow me to be saved, but does not allow someone else to be saved, then hasn't God arbitrarily chosen for me to be saved, and for that person to be lost? What kind of God does that make the Lord? God wants all people to be saved; thus, we have been allowed to make the decision regarding our own salvation. God offers us salvation, while the devil does everything he can to take it away. But we make the final decision in such matters.

Episcopal doctrine also states that we are born with a natural tendency to commit sin, and that we are born evil. Some refer to this as "Adamic sin." As a result of Adam and Eve's sin, we, too, have sinned, and there is nothing we can do about it. We are "born sinners." But the Bible teaches that is not true! We are born upright, having been created holy in God's image. In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." We then read in Genesis 2:7 that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." If God made us in His image, and we then say that every person is born sinful, what are we saying about God? Also, notice how the Scriptures clearly contradict Episcopal doctrine. In Ezekiel 28:15 we find statements being made to the king of Tyre, and the prophet says, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you." Here is a man (the king of Tyre) of whom it was said, "You were perfect from the day you were created." What does that teach us? It teaches us that people are not born sinners. Ezekiel 18:20 says that the son does not bear the sin of the father. Ecclesiastes 7:29 tells us that God made man upright, "but they sought out many schemes against Him." In Matthew 18:3 Jesus said, "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." If people are born sinners, then what does that say about little children? Jesus did not call them "sinners." Instead, He said that the kingdom of heaven is made up of people who are child-like—because they are pure, whole, and innocent. God did not create us as sinner. We are not born in sin. Rather, we choose to sin (Rom. 5:12).

The Episcopal Church also teaches that we are justified “by faith only.” Concerning this, their Thirty Nine Articles of Faith says, “Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.” Someone preached some sermons in the past, and from those sermons came the idea that people are justified “by faith only.” Yes, such an idea may be “comforting,” but is it based on Scripture? What does the Bible say? Does the Bible say that we are saved by faith alone? No. And what’s amazing is that the Bible uses the phrase “faith alone” only one time—and when it does, it says the exact opposite of Episcopal doctrine. James 2:24 says, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not** by faith only.” When God speaks about “faith only,” He says that no one is saved in such a manner. In Luke 6:46 Jesus said, “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” A person cannot simply say, “I believe in You, Lord.” Rather, a person must do what Christ has commanded. We are not saved by “faith alone.” 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.” It is not enough to look up to Heaven and say, “God, I believe in You, and I accept Your Son’s sacrifice.” Rather, a person must do what God has said. From Hebrews 5:8-9 we learn that Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Does the Bible teach that a person must repent in order to be saved? Yes, it does. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” There is one thing that a person must do in addition to having faith. Does the Bible teach that a person must confess Jesus as Lord and Savior in order to be saved? Yes, it does. In Romans 10:10 Paul said, “With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” There is another thing that is more than just having faith. Does the Bible teach that a person must be baptized in order to be saved? Yes, it does. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). While the idea of salvation by faith alone may provide a pseudo comfort, it is not taught in Scripture, but is one of the damnable doctrines of the Episcopal denomination.

Concerning the church, the Episcopal denomination has offered up some pretty amazing statements that reveal serious inconsistency between what the church teaches and what the church practices. Consider the following: “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.” The Episcopal Church teaches that Catholicism had its own set of errors. Yet 95% of all that Episcopalians do is patterned after Catholicism. How do we know what is erroneous and what is not? The church of Christ today is composed of faithful men and women who hold to the Bible. Acts 2:42 says that the church “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:47 then tells us that the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. People who have obeyed the Gospel and who are living the Christian life are right before God. Those who are in the one church that Jesus established (the church of Christ) are right before God. It is interesting to note that although the Episcopal Church condemns the Catholic Church, the Episcopal denomination follows about 95% of everything that the Catholic Church does and teaches. Does that not mean, then, that the Episcopalians are condemning themselves?

If we are not careful to what the Bible says, then we will be condemned by God. For example, the Episcopal Church is leaning more toward accepting homosexual unions and

even homosexual priests. Concerning their view, the Lambreth Conference noted that the Church

“recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God’s transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ....”

If nothing else that I have said today matters to you, please listen carefully to this. Episcopalians have opened the doors and flung them wide open to people regardless of their sexual orientation. The idea is, “Come on in because you’re a full member of the Body of Christ.” But what does the Bible say about such things? The Bible makes it abundantly clear that homosexuality is a sin that, if participated in, will cause one to be an unfaithful member of the Lord’s church. In Leviticus 18:22 says, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” Leviticus 20:12-13 says that a person who is caught in the act of homosexuality shall be taken outside the city where he is to be stoned to death. God is serious about this, isn’t He? In Romans 1:26-29 we read,

“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do those things which are not fitting.”

What does God say about homosexuality? It is unnatural and carnal, and those who participate in it will be punished. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10,

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”

The doctrines of the Episcopal denomination are not right because they are in direct contradiction to the teaching of Christ in the New Testament. We say these things to help shed light on Episcopal doctrine, but also to show what the Bible says on these matters. Are you a member of the body of Christ—a Christian? The Bible teaches that to become a member of the church of the Lord and the church for which He died, a person must hear God’s Word (Rom. 10:17), believe that Jesus is God’s Son (Jn. 8:24), confess that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 8:37), repent and turn from sin to God (Lk. 13:3), and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Mk. 16:16). I hope that today you will think seriously about the doctrine of Christ as it applies to your life. Are you living the way God wants you to? Are you sure you are in a right relationship with Him? If not, I plead with you today to obey the Gospel of Christ before it is too late.

### **Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH”

1. According to Matthew 16:18, how many churches did Jesus Christ say He would establish?
2. Ephesians 1:22-23 explains that the church is the body of Christ. According to 1 Corinthians 12:29, how many bodies (and thus how many churches) are there?
3. According to Daniel 2:44, when was the church of Christ (the kingdom of Heaven) prophesied to begin?
4. According to Jesus Christ’s remarks in Mark 9:1, was the church (the kingdom) established in the first century?
5. According to material presented in this lesson, when was the Episcopal Church established?
6. According to material presented in this lesson, who established the Episcopal Church?
7. According to material presented in this lesson, who is the head of the Episcopal Church?
8. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, who is the head of the church about which we read in the New Testament?
9. According to material presented in this lesson, what are the three sources of authority used by the Episcopal Church?
10. According to Matthew 28:18, to whom did God give “all authority in Heaven and on Earth”?
11. According to John 12:48, what source of authority will one day judge us in regard to how we have lived as Christians?
12. According to Episcopal Church teachings, reason and tradition stand on equal ground with the Bible in regard to sources of authority. What does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 say about such a teaching?
13. According to material presented in this lesson, in the Episcopal Church one bishop rules over a congregation or a diocese. What method, according to passages such as Acts 14:23, did God establish regarding the earthly leadership of the church?
14. The Episcopal Church teaches salvation by “faith only.” What does James 2:24 have to say about such a concept?
15. Episcopal Church doctrine teaches that people are born in sin. How does that compare to biblical teaching such as that found in Ezekiel 28:15 and Matthew 18:3?
16. What must an individual do, according to New Testament teaching, to become a Christian?