

Christian Faith, Church, and Stumbling Block

Great and general Bible subjects; but questions about which arise quite often in Bible Q and A.

6-1: What is the Meaning of Faith?

In the Bible usages of "faith", there are two basic meanings: (1) faith as the individual possession of a person which is a simple matter of trust and commitment to God, Christ, and the Bible; and (2) the body of beliefs of Christians from the time of Christ and written in the Bible as "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). And once a believer **{one who exercises faith in Christ}** has developed enough experience at both (1) knowledge and experience with the Bible and (2) leaning on the Holy Spirit for understanding of life and the Bible, the two basic usages merge into one. That is, the individual faith of the believer grows, with Bible experience as taught individually by the Spirit, becomes more and more like the "faith once for all delivered to the saints".

We are fortunate in God's great design of the communications system from heaven that we have such an objective and stable source of recorded matters of faith as in the Bible which is: (1) divine in origin, that is it came from God the Father as mediated by the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, and as explained and taught throughout the world by God the Holy Spirit; (2) absolute in authority, when God speaks as He does in the Bible, it is not possible to place any other

authority above that authority, and that authority takes precedence in all cases, in spite of some instances and practices in history--this assumes also the Bible principle of the importance of the believer which with belief receives the new birth, alias the presence of the Holy Spirit in the inward life {see the Bible Q and A answers on "How Is God Manifest to Us and Not to the World?" and on the John 14 teachings of Jesus}; (3) sufficient in message, it is impossible not to find guidance in the Bible on every issue of life and especially of salvation through faith and grace of the Bible, and by far most of the answers go far beyond simple guidance to definite answers from God to man, the Bible always assuming two spiritual facts, which are (a) that God wrote and preserved and promoted in human history the Bible in order to communicate to those members of humanity that would come to Him with the right attitude--"the person who would come to God must believe that He, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him", and (b) that you have the help of the Spirit in understanding, interpretation, and application of Scriptures {and by the way, you will not see that sufficiency and adequacy for salvation and life apart from extensive personal experience in the Bible whereby you compare scripture with scripture, that is that what is recorded in John sheds light on what is in Romans, and vice versa, and with all the other books of the Bible}; and (4) high fidelity in communications, the Bible "is alive and dynamic", God does communicate to His believers in the Bible, and with the proper attitude it is not only possible to understand but impossible to misunderstand, for the Bible is self-interpretative in the sense that what is written one place in the Bible of 66 books is explained another place.

Please read Romans 10:6-18 and Hebrews 12:1 from the Bible itself, and any version; and read the faith related answers to other Bible Q and A answers starting on www.biblecombibleman.com/BibleAnswers0/ and www.biblecombibleman.com/Answers/ . Also for the latest Tables on Bible Question Answers, please go to:

www.sungristbible.com/BibleQandA_Table6andQuestionsAbove120.aspx .

If you desire an alphabetical listing of all 150 plus answers to Bible search questions since the start of SunGrist_Bible on the internet, please go to the sister website of understandbible.googlepages.com as follows:

<http://understandbible.googlepages.com/bibleqanda> .

NOTE: You may want to read the complete message/chapter of "Christian Faith, Church, and Stumbling Block" on a page of the biblecombibleman website of SunGrist_Bible: www.biblecombibleman.com/FaithChurchAndStumblingBlock/ .

6-2: What is the Foundation of the Church?

It is not without significance that the most distorted doctrines of the Bible center around church and what is the foundation of the church. The battle of history has raged against the simple Bible fact that the real church is the total body of Christ with the only church roll written in heaven where neither Satan, nor religious leaders, and any member of a local church or denomination here on earth can see it! Always and ever, local churches, denominations, and groups of the most interdenominational nature have made, and still do, make claims to be the "elect" of God centered around church, churches, and the assembly of the firstborn written in heaven. Shocker, even the more recent local churches like the "Church of the Firstborn", and like the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Christ, even certain interdenominational and nondenominational groups, are always staking their claim on being the only church, the only body of Christ. These dreams of exclusiveness center around a distortion of two primary Bible doctrines, in some cases coming with false practices of special revelations that have supplemented the Bible as most of us know it, the Bible of 66 books, or from religious man's ego to establish an authority over Scripture that is greater than Scripture, one that can never exist in the sight of God. The only authorities greater than the Bible--divine in origin, absolute in authority, sufficient in message, high fidelity in communication, and self-interpretative--are God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. And we know ever since they had recorded for us in Jude 3 that the Bible records a "faith once for all delivered to the saints", there will be no more special revelations from them, only more illuminations of what was delivered and written through the Apostles and Prophets.

1. No local church roll or denominational roll or any religious group list presently here on earth is inclusive of or synonymous with the church roll written in heaven, the roll of the body of Christ.

"...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are registered in heaven." (Hebrews 12:23)

How can you miss that? The only registration possible for an assurance of enrollment for salvation and eternity is the "registration in heaven"; and while enrollment in any local church or denomination {including the big four--Mormons,

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Church of Christ, Roman Catholic Church, and some non-denominational} certainly increases your probability, maybe, or a registration in heaven, it does not assure with certainty that enrollment in heaven.

By the way, there is a fifth haughty group among many local churches, who even without doctrinal claims of exclusivity, think they are God's own very exclusive people, the elect of God!

2. How do these six exclusive, sort of the country club of religion, groups justify such doctrinal stances independent of the large volume of Scripture on the exact nature of church, churches, and the body of Christ?

a. Many ignored the consistent Bible teachings, 128 times in the New Testament, of "church", or *ecclesia* in Greek. It is suggested that if you really desire to get to the bottom of this matter then run these 128 references by simply looking up "church" in a thorough concordance like YOUNG'S or STRONG'S. Even the concordance in the back of your Bible is better than ignorance on the matter that can affect your eternal salvation.

b. Many, past and present, because of just plain ego and human pride, with exclusiveness, have considered themselves above the Bible just like Nixon considered himself to be above the law.

3. There are two Bible curses on any group of groups that add special revelations to the 66 books of the Word of God.

a. The curse of adding to or taking away from the Bible of Revelation 22:18,19.

"For 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 this 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." (Revelation 22:18,19)

NOTE: That "registration in heaven", that of the only real church roll that counts for salvation and the good things of the book of Revelation, is in a certain book mentioned here, "the Book of Life."

b. If anyone all the way up to an angel from heaven, if anyone preach another gospel, or gospel of the church, to you than that which the Apostle Paul preached, and by the way all the other Apostles including Peter which we will come to momentarily, then they are cursed.

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:8)

And Paul in Galatians repeats the curse twice, adding in the next verse that what churches receive today should be no different than what the Apostles preached, and the first churches received of the first century when the “the faith once for all delivered” became “the faith once for all delivered”, crystallized in circulated letters and then a New Testament with Old Testament Canon.

4. That brings us to the second great distortion of Scripture, once again for several reasons, whereby some churches declare themselves the only church and all the church: that the Apostle Peter was appointed head of the church, even the wording is blasphemous as Christ was and still is the only head of the Church according to the Word of God, and independent of any special revelations of the past or present, when Jesus told Peter, “upon this rock I will build My church”. (Matthew 16:18) So clearly is this the foundation of the church, and as the church of Jesus with the words “My church”, that it has become the battle ground for exclusiveness now and in history.

a. What Jesus was really telling Peter was that his previous profession of faith in Jesus as the Matthew 16:16, “thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, makes faith the foundation for entrance into the church of the firstborn, written in heaven.

b. Who can know how Peter could foretell ahead of time that later a whole religious organization would distort this foundation and Scripture, apart from the Holy Spirit and the possibility that it was already happening to Christians in the first century; however, not matter what the reason, Peter wrote two epistles to explain the real foundation of the church along with other important matters of Christian faith.

(1). All Christians, that is true believers with a similar profession of faith as that expressed by Peter and commended by Christ as the means of entrance into His own church, are “living stones” to the same extent that Peter was a stone or rock.

"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men {you see how first Christ is the living stone, and indeed the foundation stone like the cornerstone of any building}, you also, as living stones {yes, Peter was a living stone, the reason Jesus made that play on words, however you are as much as Peter among the whole company of believers as living stone} , are being built up a spiritual house {by that is the one church written in heaven, a spiritual house, no material building or organization, that can only exist in heaven and later on the New Earth as the eternal people of God--you can not blame many religious leaders of history and of today for wanting to secure and improve their job and status security with claims to be the only church, or can you as it is much like the greed and covetousness and dreams of visions that God condemned in the book of Jeremiah}, a holy priesthood {yes, according to the Apostle Peter and the Word of God, you are as much a priest in the sight of God as one who wears the uniform, that is if you have made that same profession of faith}, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (I Peter 2:4)

(2). The Consistent and Constant Message of Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, for example here from the Apostle Peter in I Peter 2:6 and as quoted from Isaiah 28:16, is that the "Him", that is the Jesus Christ, is the only "chief cornerstone" for Christian to believe in and on.

"Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.'" (I Peter 2:6)

PLEASE NOTE: Who is capitalized, "Him", the Christ referring back to the Jesus Christ of the previous verse; and whose is in little letters, "he who believes", us and the Apostle Peter.

(3). According to Peter's own explanation of the chief cornerstone, alias the foundation of the church of the firstborn written in heaven, versus the living stones--"to you who believe" of I Peter 2:7,8 to follow; because all of those who will not accept this proper interpretation of the church and the proper profession of faith in Christ for entrance and salvation in the church, that expressed in Matthew 16, are among the disobedient that reject Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone, instead the stone becomes a stone of stumbling and offence.

"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but of those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence'." (Isaiah 8:14, Psalm 118:22 and I Peter 2:7,8)

Boy, Peter did not want you to misunderstand on Who is the chief cornerstone and main building block, just on that individual faith is the foundation for entrance into the church, nor of the church written in heaven, or of the Christ, the head of the church on earth **{by the way it is also sacri-religious to claim any other head of the church here on earth than that of Christ: it is disobedient, and it is against the teachings of Peter and the Word of God}** and in heaven; and at the same time for you to know that it was in the total context of the Bible from David in Psalms 118:22 to the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 8:14 to himself, Peter, in a letter to all the first century Christians and churches. The second most serious and sacri-religious blasphemy possible is to get in the way between any believer and their Christ, claiming to provide salvation for them in other ways that like the profession of faith that Peter made as the foundation for entrance into the church of the living God.

5. It would be impossible to stop this discussion about Faith, Christ, and the Church written in heaven, without a quote of at least one of those approximately 24 times of the 128 in the New Testament translated "church" from ecclesia, one that shows the inclusive nature of the church as the very body of Christ and the one where Christ, in reality and on earth and in heaven, is the head of the church. {There is absolutely no reason to think that Christ every gave up the headship of this church of the firstborn, the real church of all Christians, in favor of any person on earth no matter how august are the claims, or outlandish!}

(1). Even as no husband, faithful to the Bible, is going to give us his wife to another, so Christ the only real head of the church in heaven and on earth is not going to relinquish His church to another.

"...Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrangle or any such thing, but that she should be hold and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27)

(2). Even as Christ's own body--once on earth, once killed and once resurrected; and now in heaven; and once to return again--is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, so also "the church" of which Jesus is the Head.

"...for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24)

(3). There is no "was" head of the church in Ephesians 5:23, only Christ "is" head of the church; and of that body, the church, He, Christ, is still "the Saviour of the body".

"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church, and He is the Saviour of the body." (Ephesians 5:23)

NOTE: If you are still not convinced, then search the Scriptures for yourself, looking up all the references to "church" in the Bible, especially noting the approximately 24 that are for the whole body of Christ, the church written in heaven and of which all Christians are a member, as contrasted to the rest of the approximately 128 which primarily refer to local churches.

You may want to read the total message/chapter on a page of the SunGrist_Bible website at the on-line address of:

www.biblecombibleman.com/FaithChurchAndStumblingBlock/ .

6-3: The Doctrine of the Apostles.

Before we come to section 4 on the "Stumbling Block" and "Stumbling" in the Bible, this is a good time having mentioned to the two Apostles of Peter and Paul, equals in Christian faith and in the gifts the Ascended Christ gave to men and equal in the writing of Scriptures except Paul was selected by the Ascended Christ to be chief editor of the Bible, and equals in death if tradition is to be believed that both Peter and Paul were crucified upside down in Rome and at the same time. **{This may seem crude to you to say; but still Rome in the form of the Roman Catholic Church, the Vatican which is a state as well as claiming to be the church, and those of Rome and Italy that claim to be Christians, is crucifying upside down both Peter and Paul, and even crucifying afresh and anew the Lord Jesus Christ.}**

1. The Doctrine of the Apostles is the Doctrine of the Bible; and since all the Bible is "doctrine" is the only sense it was ever meant to be in the Bible, of the "teachings" of the Bible, the Bible is the doctrine of the Apostles, at least the

New Testament half; and also since the New Testament is more an explanation, and with quotes, of both the teachings of Jesus and the Old Testament, then you would have to include the whole Bible in the Doctrine of the Apostles. {Oh yes, this "doctrine of the Apostles" phrase has been misused and abused like so many other Scriptures of the Bible, especially of the foundation of the church and of Christian faith as previously discussed.} We could just take it one apostle at a time, from Peter to Paul to John to show how this doctrine or teachings from the Apostles as recorded in the Bible is and was Bible, that is Word of God; however after we have briefly gone through the line of reasoning from the Bible, you should see the trend with only these three Apostles.

2. Almost all recognize Peter as an Apostle {the most popular and consistent download of SunGrist_Bible through the years of the websites is "The Testimony of Peter to Jesus", the download of which is available at:

[www.biblecombibleman.com/The_Apostle_Peter/ .}](http://www.biblecombibleman.com/The_Apostle_Peter/)

; and when Jesus about the same time as his profession of faith in Christ as the foundation of the church, and of the "I will build My church" statement of Jesus", Jesus in giving the "keys of the kingdom" to Peter authorized him to write Scriptures that would bind things both on earth and in heaven, likewise giving certain others of the Apostles like Matthew, John, James, and Jude to write binding Scriptures with the authority of God and Christ. (Matthew 16:19) {By the way, no where in the Bible are we told that these keys of the kingdom of writing authoritative scripture were passed on to any other human and religious authorities in history, alias there were and or no other Apostles since the twelve and no more writing apostles but the few with books in the Bible; and further the Apostle John cautions early against those who claim to be Apostles and or not, also a message of Christ in Revelation was given to a blacksliden church who also had false apostles who assumed the call and authority of Christ for themselves!}

3. Peter in II Peter 3:15,16 testifies to the authority of Paul as an Apostle to write Scriptures, a testimony that Paul also like other Apostles was given the binding keys of the kingdom of scripture writing, even as was the authority also of the Writing Prophets in the Old Testament. {This is another way to say that all the Bible as Word of God was written by Apostles and Prophets; and the five volume set of the LEARN CHRIST FROM THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, not only does this note that (1) Christ must be learned properly, (2) that quite often Christ has not been learned properly, (3) that "indeed

all believers must personally hear Christ and see Christ" (Ephesians 4:20,21), but also (4) when you learn Christ from the Apostles and Prophets, alias from reading the books of the Old Testament and the epistles of the Prophets, you are learning Christ from what is really Bible.} Of course, primary to all that and the very foundation of the Bible is the teachings of Jesus, which were recorded in the four Gospels, then amplified and explained by the writing Apostles of the Bible.

4. When James, Peter, and John--pillars in the church at Jerusalem--recognized the grace of God and gifts of Christ given to Paul, they blessed his efforts to go primarily to the Gentiles while they primarily went to the Jews. (Galatians 2:9)

5. Paul had to reprimand Peter for discrimination in the Gospel against Gentiles in Galatians 2:11-14, a thing surely which would not have been done if (1) Peter was a Pope {actually pope was started much later in the third century as a pastor at the church in Rome, like any other pastor and with no more authority in the sight of God and in the gifts given by the Ascended Christ of Ephesians, decided to be the chief pastor of all churches in the Roman Empire, something he assumed for himself, and something never ever blessed by God as you can see by the history of the Vatican in the world}; and (2) Peter, and not Paul and the other Apostles, had the keys to the kingdom for the binding authority of Scriptures.

6. The Ascended Christ from heaven, after the call on earth of the Apostles whom he chose except for Paul whom the Ascended Christ chose, gave the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors to churches and the church on earth; and the natural implication is since it was given in heaven where Christ will dwell until the Second Coming, the authority of those offices under Christ will remain the same as Christ.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for..." (Ephesians 4:11)

Paul likes in this verse to emphasize the reality of the truth that Christ, "He Himself gave some..." That is, that the choice of these only such authorized offices of the church on earth, still of course with registration in heaven where applicable--that is, where really saved and real believers--is done only by Christ as the continued head of the church; and like so many other things, is blasphemous when this authority is usurped.

7. By the way, this indicates also a history of "prophets" in New Testament times, some examples of which were the prophets of Acts who warned Paul not to go to imprisonment in Rome; however, even as I Corinthians 14 cautions against the commonly abused practices of "prophesy" in any church as to "edify, exhort, and comfort", also established certain principles in prayer, praise, worship, and preaching of "with understanding" and in the spirit, so also there is a long history of how to tell false prophets from true prophets and likewise what comes out of their mouth in prophesy in the Old Testament, starting with Moses in Deuteronomy and running through Jeremiah where all the official prophets and priests (1) practiced deceit, (2) were covetous, (3) ran when God had not sent them, and (4) dreamed and had visions not part of the Word of God. {For more on this, please read "How to ID False Prophets and False Teachers" on the biblecom-bibleman website of SunGrist Bible:

[www.biblecom-bibleman.com/How_To_ID_False_Prophets_and_Teachers/ .}](http://www.biblecom-bibleman.com/How_To_ID_False_Prophets_and_Teachers/)

6-4: Explain "Stumbling Block" and "Stumbling" in the Bible.

While "stumbling block" is famous in the Bible where Christ Crucified as the way of salvation is obstacle to many that prevents them from coming to the God of the Universe and salvation {by the way it is unnecessary for most of the Jews and others to let it be a stumbling bock, still Christ is the only way God has provided}, "stumbling" as an obstacle to continued faith in Christ is just as common although less appreciated.

1. Almost all of Israel "stumbled" at the "stumbling block" because they sought, and still do, righteousness by works instead of by law.

"but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whosoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'" (Romans 9:31-33 and Isaiah 8:14 and Isaiah 28:16)

NOTE: The Apostle Peter quoted the same verse from the Old Testament in his discussions above about faith as the foundation of the church and Christ as the foundation stone.

2. In the chapter context of Isaiah 8, where the quote from Paul is first found, first Isaiah records that God spoke with him with a strong hand, and thus very

definitely told Isaiah in no uncertain terms not to walk in the ways of the people of God at that time. Then:

"He will be as a sanctuary {who, the LORD of hosts above, or God the Father}, but a stone of stumbling and rock of offense to both the house of Israel. {The divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel.} As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken." (Isaiah 8:14,15)

You might say based on this Scripture that all of those who would be among God's people are faced with two choices from the God of the Universe: (1) either to allow God through faith and grace, apart from works of righteousness, to be a Sanctuary to them; or (2) to allow God to be a trap or a snare to them without this righteousness by faith, alias to cause them to "stumble", then go beyond the stumbling to "fall and be broken".

3. Jesus in His teachings explained the alternatives of either (1) falling on the stumbling block of Jesus, or (2) allowing the stumbling block to fall on you.

"Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore is say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this tone will be broken, but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.'" (Matthew 21:42-44 and Psalm 118:22,23)

What is obvious here from the exegesis is: (1) builders of temples and religious organizations like that of the Jews, rejected the very chief cornerstone of God that selected to build through Christ a church, that same church written in heaven you read above; (2) that this choice of rejection of the stone or acceptance as the chief cornerstone is and was the work of the LORD God the Father of the Universe; (3) the kingdom of God was taken away from the nation of the Jews and given to the Gentile nations; (4) only a nation that bears the righteous fruits of God can keep that kingdom as a nation; and (5) individually in any nation, Jew or Gentile, when that person or person falls on the stone they are broken through repentance and saved through faith in Christ, or if because of a lack of faith, usually because righteousness is sought through works, then this same stone falls on them to ultimately grind them into the powder of eternal destruction.

4. Paul as he did often, as chief editor of the New Testament and as one specially instructed in Arabia by the Ascended Christ, also through the Holy Spirit like other Apostles to know more than Christ taught while on earth, explained the "stumbling block" to us as a matter of how ones reacted to the crucifixion of Christ, alias the atonement: (1) to the Jews the reaction was that it was a stumbling block; (2) to the Greeks it was a reaction of foolishness; and (3) to those of the Jews and Greeks that were called to be Christians, it was "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God". What was really a stumbling block to the Jews, or to any who fail to accept God's plan of salvation through Christ and the cross, was the preaching of the Crucifixion of Christ as the plan of salvation.

"but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (I Corinthians 1:23,24)

