

IS THERE A REAL FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH?

It was an exciting time to be alive. New worlds were being discovered, fascinating places populated by strange people with even stranger customs. Still more, there were rumors of a bubbling spring with waters so pure that one could regain youthful vigor and vitality simply by bathing in its healing waters. Really, is that so hard to believe?

Even the Bible speaks of a pool in Jerusalem called Bethesda. It was commonly believed you would be healed if you were the first to enter when the waters started bubbling. Is it any wonder that Ponce de Leon, who sailed with Columbus on his second voyage, was so intrigued when told of a wonderful island called Bimini. On this island there was reported to be a fountain with the magical powers of youth. One could bathe in this fountain and regain youthful vitality, thereby living forever. But the legend of the “fountain of youth” turned out to be just that, a legend.

Mankind has been searching for life extenders in one form or another ever since man “blew it” in the Garden of Eden. Eve believed Satan’s lie that she would not surely die, and brought death to mankind. Is eternal life still a worthwhile aspiration for mankind? If so, wouldn’t it be logical to look where the light of truth can be found?

Searching Where It Can't Be Found

Perhaps you remember the old funny paper characters called Mutt & Jeff. Jeff came upon Mutt one night, under a streetlight searching for a lost quarter. He obligingly joined in the search. After a long period of no results, Jeff asked Mutt if he was sure he lost it there. Mutt said, "Oh no, I lost it over there, in the dark." "Well why are you looking here then?" asked Jeff. "Because there's light here," replied Mutt.

Mutt's logic had an obvious flaw, but there are times when our own logic, although not as obvious, may be just as flawed. It is logical to look in the light, but we must be sure that what we are looking for is in that light and that it is true light. II Corinthians 11:14 warns us that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Although his light may appear to be bright indeed, you will never find what you are looking for in his false light. True light will outshine the false light, exposing its hidden darkness of lies.

Avoiding Mutt's Street Light

Our subject today is *life, eternal-life*, and we are going to look where the true light is, and where what we are looking for can be found. We know this true light as the "**Word of God**," the light of the world. It is there we are told of people that walked in darkness who saw a great light; they who dwelled in the land of the shadow of

death. It was on them that the light shined. We can read about it in Isaiah 9:2 and Matthew 4:16.

John 8:12, tells us that if we follow Jesus, we will not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Also, in II Timothy 1:10 we read that Jesus Christ has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. So, it can be found in His Gospel; but can we yet be deceived? Emphatically, yes! We must continue our search in Christ's word.

The key word in our search is GOSPEL, or as translated, good news, for it really is good news for mankind. It is such a simple message, yet so misunderstood. Let's see if we can unscramble the many confusing and erroneous definitions, analyses and explanations of this *key* to everlasting life, the real "fountain of youth." It is imperative that we uncover that plain and simple message found in "The gospel of Jesus Christ" that has been so cleverly clouded over by the many "ministers of righteousness", so called. (II Cor. 11:12-15)

Perhaps a good place to start would be in one of God's early instructions on how He insisted on being approached by man. Exodus 20:23-26 gives us a commandment against devising, working out, or originating our own approach to God instead of following His specific instructions. Read it. Notice how simple He keeps it, no complicated rituals, no gilded thrones, just a humble,

sincere approach to the Father. He desires no fluff from man.

Remember the commercial with the punch line, “Mother, I’d rather do it myself”? Well here is one of man’s earlier versions of “I’d rather do it myself.” Genesis 11:4 demonstrates man’s arrogant attempt to build a tower that would enable him to climb (by steps of his own making) into heaven itself. It was man establishing his own religion, which is as futile as Ponce de Leon’s search for his fountain of youth.

Could It Be That Religion, Not Atheism, Is Satan’s Ultimate Weapon Against Mankind?

From the Tower of Babel to the great false church of Revelation we see man, in one way or another, using hewn stones and building steps to the altar of God, and thus polluting it. We are constantly trying to insert our own righteousness into the mix, forgetting that God views all our righteousness as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Critical Knowledge

There are six critical questions that must be addressed if we are to find that *key* to the fountain of youth that Ponce de Leon was unable to discover. These questions are:

Who man is, and just as important, who man is not?

Who Jesus Christ is, and just as important, who Jesus Christ is not?

What did Jesus Christ come here to accomplish, and very important, did He achieve it?

1. Who man is?

Genesis 1:27 tells us that man was created in the image of God. Man, putting his two cents in, has been making God in his (man's) image ever since. An image, like a counterfeit, is made to look like the real thing; but it is not the real thing. We are not Gods!

Isaiah 43:7 reveals to us that Man was created for the glory of God, and to give glory to God. Of all the glorious wonders of God's creation, man was to be his crowning glory, the epitome of His creation.

We read in Revelation 5:10 that in the resurrection mankind is to rule as kings and priests on earth and will even judge angels. Yet, according to Genesis 3:19, man in his present state, is *mortal* (also I Cor. 15:54). "For dust you are and to dust you will return." We are told in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. All mankind is guilty of sin, and as so, we are under a death penalty. Man's condition, we must conclude, is therefore, hopeless without Christ's intervention.

2. Who man is not

(It is very important that we know this).

Man is not a *God*, nor can he attain Godhood by obedience, dedication, higher thought, or any effort of his

own including law keeping. We are unclean, and all our attempts at righteousness are as filthy rags according to Isaiah 64:6.

Man is not *immortal*. Only God has immortality (I Tim. 6:16). Man cannot attain immortality except through the resurrection (Rom. 6:5). For this mortal must put on immortality (I Cor. 15:53). Ephesians 1:13 explains to us how we are sealed by our belief in the Son of God.

3. Who is Christ?

Jesus Christ is: Fully God and fully man, yet was born of the flesh and has come in the flesh (II John 7), and born of a virgin (sinless) (Isaiah 7:14).

Jesus Christ is:

The only begotten Son of the most high God (I John 4:9).

The first fruits of many to follow (Rev. 14:4, I Cor. 15:20).

The only mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5).

The only way by which man can receive eternal life (John 14:6).

The only name by which man can be saved (Acts 2:21).

The light of the world and the light of life (John 8:12).

And He was:

Foreordained, before the earth was formed, to die on the cross in our stead. The perfect Lamb provided by God for the ultimate once-and-for-all sacrifice (I Pet. 1:18-20). He was fully the Son of God and the son of man.

4. Who Christ is not

Jesus warned of many false Christs in the latter days (Matt. 24:5,11,24). Let's bear Christ's words in mind as we dispute commonly heard claims of some, so-called, Christian religions by using scripture.

Often heard false claims:

1. *He is mere man who has attained godhood.* Ans: (Matt. 26:63-64; Mk. 3:11; John 1:32-34; 2:18-22; 10:30; 20:29-31).

2. *He is the brother of Satan.* Ans: Satan is a created being. (Ezk. 28:12-15). Jesus is God's Son (John 1:14; 3:16; Heb 11:17; I John 4:9). God had only one Son.

3. *Jesus was a created being.* Ans: Jesus created all things (John 1:1-4; 17:1; Col. 1:16-17). Did He create himself?

4. *He is Michael the archangel.* Ans. All angels were created by GOD through Christ who created all things that were made (Job 38:7 John 1:1-4).

5. *He is a human man combined with a divine idea.* Ans. He is much more than an idea; He is a real living being and the Son of God. See above references.

6. *He is one of a long line of "Masters" who had themselves realized divinity by receiving "divine truth."* Ans. There never has been, there is no one now and there never will be any like Jesus Christ. (Acts 43:12).

7. *He came into existence when Mary conceived. He was only in God's foreknowledge (not manifested) prior to conception.* Ans: He existed long before He became incarnate (John. 1:1-2; 17:5). How could He have made everything if He only came into existence at birth?

8. *He is an ascended master, a guru, an avatar, a divine essence, the same as Krishna, etc.* Ans. None of the above! Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, who came as a real physical man, and died a real death and was resurrected to the glory He had before the world was (John 17:4-5; I John 4:9; I Pet. 1:18-20).

9. *He is the perfect-man "idea" of the "higher-self" of every individual.* Ans. Much more than an idea, He is real and while here on earth could be seen, touched and even died just as we all do.

10. *He, through some means, attained deity.* Ans. He was deity before the world was (John 1:1-3).

11. *He was a man who was no different, in any respect at all, from us.* Ans. The difference is, He was born sinless and He was the First Born, and only, Son of God.

12. *Jesus did not spend a full three days and three nights in the grave, as He was crucified Friday afternoon and rose Sunday morning.* Ans. Jesus was crucified Wednesday and rose Saturday, as scripture will reveal to the diligent searchers. Jesus fulfilled the only sign given to those who seek signs in order to believe (Matt. 12:39-40). (See study guide, "THE DAY CHRIST DIED").

It is quite obvious that the Christ of the aforementioned claims is not the same as the Christ of the Bible. Is "another Jesus" being taught (II Cor. 11:4)? Can a false Christ save? Those teaching a false Christ will frequently use the same terms Christians use, but with wildly different meanings.

Paul admonishes us to be aware that “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising that his servants disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (II Cor. 11:13-15). When approached by any of these people, would it not be wise to ask them to define who their Christ is? Did Jesus warn us of not a few, but many, coming in his name? Did He warn of false Christs, and false prophets deceiving many (Matt. 24:5,24)? Is it important to be able to tell the difference?

5. What Christ Came To Do

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). “--- that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9b, also Heb. 9:28 & I Pet. 2:24). Isaiah 53 recites a wonderful and very accurate prophecy and description of the coming of Christ.

6. What Christ has accomplished

Remember reading how Christ prayed three times with such fervor that He sweated, as it were, great drops of blood. Pleading, if at all possible for some other way to be found to save mankind, other than death on the cross (Matt. 26:39, Lk. 22:42). But God said no, because there was no other way, no other name, and no other savior. If there had been any other way, wouldn't the Father have answered His Son's prayer, and answered it right then? Remember this, you will always be given what you pray for -- or something better. Because Jesus got something better, (Kingship) we get eternal life.

By dying on the cross, Christ blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing them (the handwriting enumerating our sins) to the cross (Col. 2:14). The word handwriting comes from “cheirographon” which means, “certificate of indebtedness,” a kind of spiritual IOU for our sins, which demanded our life as payment. It was that IOU that was nailed to the cross, not God’s law. The law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12-13); but sin (transgression of the law, I John 3:4) worked death, by that which was good.

Of the three elements that make up the old covenant, God, the law, and man, which failed? God? Absolutely not! The law? How could something that is perfect, that stands fast and forever and ever, and is done in truth, fail? (Ps. 19:7; 111:8). So, it had to have been man that failed.

**God Did Not Lower The Bar,
He Lifted Man Over It.**

God’s standards were not lowered or compromised, but met. Christ did not nail the law to the cross. It was the verdict, the sentence of death, the IOU that was nailed to the cross. Christ’s work of redemption has been successfully completed. His very words were, “It is finished!” (John. 19:30). (See A STORY OF GRACE).

The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes (Rom.1:16). However, a weak, diluted, or false gospel, unlike the true gospel, does

not have the power of salvation. When you are inoculated against a disease, you are given germs of the very disease you are trying to prevent. The theory being that by giving you a small dose of weakened or dead germs, your body will build up antibodies so that you can fight off the real thing when you are exposed to it. Do you suppose there might be some weak or dead churches out there, inoculating some against God's gospel of power, His living church? So that when presented with the true gospel people might say, "been there, done that, or tried that, it doesn't work." Or worse, thinking they are saved when they are not. This, also, is a false light.

You can generally recognize these diluted gospels as:

a. The gospel of health and wealth

The "name it and claim it" group. Tell that to the many martyrs that have died, and are still dying yet today for their faith in Jesus. God did promise us a rose garden; but we're going to have to deal with a lot of thorns in the meantime.

b. The positive thinking group

Self esteem. "Don't call sin what it is, that would be demeaning and would destroy human dignity." It is designed so as to offend no one. However, God calls us to deny self and esteem Him. Positive thinking while denying truth has no power. Read Isaiah 9-10

c. The nominal gospel group

"Sure I believe in God, and I go to church at every convenience, especially on Easter Sunday, but I don't let it interfere with my life. Besides, grace has replaced the law." A gospel of convenience has no power.

Hear what God says about the lukewarm Christian in Revelation 3:16. "I will spew you out of my mouth." The word for spew is also translated vomit.

Many False Lights

Satan, the one who appears as a light, the great deceiver, sponsors many false gospels; but have you noticed how they seem to follow a pattern? They either **elevate man** to God-hood or **demote Christ** to mere manhood by denying His divinity. They will claim that man either is, or can become God, through his own efforts. Or they will refuse to accept Christ as the true and only Son of the most-high God, claiming that He is really only a prophet, or even a great man, but not divine. Or, maybe He became a God, but He was just a common, ordinary man like you and me until then. Therefore, we too can become Gods. Sound familiar? Isn't that the same lie Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden?

Those that knowingly or unknowingly reject the free gift of grace generally fall into two categories, rituals and/or self-effort.

Rituals make redemption an ongoing process, thus requiring a special earthly priesthood to administer the sacraments and rituals. Sacramentalism is the belief that liturgy's form and formulas transmit spiritual power beyond that of the sincerity of the heart. Salvation, therefore, comes through the sacraments, and not by faith alone, thereby negating grace. Wouldn't that be like giving man control over God's spiritual power by performing rituals? Who is really in control then, God or man?

When asked, "What must I do to be saved?" The reply was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved" (Acts 16:31). That's all, nothing else, but it's only a beginning to a total transformation, see Hebrews 6:1-2.

Self-effort denies the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. "We must do our part," says man. So man persists in his self-righteous resolve to contribute something toward his salvation. Salvation thus becomes a Christ plus this or that ritual or effort on one's own part. Faith in God's grace produces good works, good works alone cannot produce salvation (Eph. 2:10).

Are ornate temples, mosques, cathedrals, lofty steeples, and exalted and gilded altars, not continuations of Babel? What about the elaborate ceremonies, luxurious vestments, and impressive rituals of many of today's religions? Are we not using our own tools, hewing stones and building steps, seeking salvation in our own way?

Again, “*Father, we’d rather do it ourselves.*” Are such worldly enhancements required or even desired by a God that has directed us to worship Him in the simplicity and purity of spirit and in truth?

Our bodies, rather than earthly cathedrals, are the true temples of the Holy Spirit. We are to glorify God in body and spirit, (but don’t forget truth) which were bought and are owned by God (I Cor. 6:19-20).

There are peripheral issues on which Christians may differ, but as we learn and seek God’s truth we will become more unified in our Christian walk. However, this we can all agree on: Salvation is only available through grace, by faith. Even that is not of our-selves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to **do** good works (*from a heartfelt desire to please God, not as a bargaining chip for salvation*) (Eph. 2:8-10). But first comes salvation, a new heart, a new spirit, and an actual new creation. No longer are we under the penalty of the law. We have been bought with a price (I Cor. 6:20). As has been said, “Grace may be free but it ain’t cheap.”

The Real Fountain Of Youth

The long sought fountain of youth, then, is found in the grace of God, where we will receive living waters, free for the taking. Jesus said, “But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up into

eternal life” (Jn. 4:14 Rev. 7:17). We, ourselves, will become fountains of living water (Jn. 7:38). Let’s be sure we are walking in the *true* light of God’s word, not looking in a light of convenience, as Mutt did, but rather where the saving power of God’s truth is found. Where we are told “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17). Remember, that was said before there was a New Testament. Is Paul telling Timothy that all of the Old Testament should be read, believed and taught today, with the same authenticity as we do the New Testament?

It has been well said that: "The New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed." Thus giving us the two witness' necessary to establish a thing, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. (Matt. 18:16).



**There are great lights and there are false lights.
Do you know the difference?**

Isaiah gives us a clue, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa 8:20).

Paul describes how Satan and his ministers will appear to the world of religion.

"But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:12-15 NKJB).

We are forewarned:

Satan and his ministers will appear as shining lights of decency, kindness and righteousness, do not be deceived.

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Other study guides of interest:

A STORY OF GRACE
 AND YE SHALL BE AS GODS
 AN ANGEL SPOKE TO ME
 ANSWERS TO THOSE WHO HAVE CREPT IN UNAWARES
 HAS TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY LOST ITS WAY?
 LET'S TALK ABOUT THE DOCTRINES OF CHRIST
 THE DAY JESUS , THE CHRIST OF GOD, DIED
 WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT I, THE SON OF MAN, AM