

# Premillennialism and Crossroadsism — A Refutation From Acts 1–11

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## Premillennialism

What is premillennialism? The word *premillennial* means “pertaining to or believing in some event that will occur before a millennium.” A millennium is a period of 1,000 years, which in the Biblical context refers to that span of time mentioned in Revelation 20:1–7 in connection with the Lord’s second coming. Thus in the context of religion, *premillennial* conveys the idea of Jesus’ second appearance in advance of the 1,000-year period. *Premillennialism* is the system of theology (not merely “a doctrine”) that focuses upon the events that will allegedly transpire in advance of and during that 10-century period.

Salient tenets of this theological scheme include the following:

1. Jesus intended to establish a literal, earthly kingdom over His people (the Jews) at His first coming.
2. The Jews thwarted that purpose by rejecting and crucifying Him.
3. Upon Jesus’ second coming, He will establish an earthly political kingdom that will last 1,000 years.
4. He will reinstate the Law of Moses and reign upon the restored throne of David.

The foregoing list omits numerous other details concerning and claims of this system, depending upon which variety of it is under consideration (e.g., the “rapture,” “the great tribulation,” a literal “battle of Armageddon,” etc.).

Our need to study repeatedly this and other doctrinal themes and errors lies in the fact that brethren go through “knowledge cycles.” Faithful brethren may beat down false systems and/or practices for a while, as has been done more than once among the Lord’s people. Then someone like Robert Shank will come along and write a book on it and revive it. Some will sympathize with him, others will defend him, and still others will say they do not agree with him, but (according to what he says, at least) will say that they are neither going to oppose him or disfellowship him. Therefore, we must deal with such matters time-after-time so that the present generation may remain steadfast in the faith.

Because of space limitations, I will be able to discuss only two principal foundations of premillennialism and the way material in the first few chapters of Acts refute them. If I can

demonstrate (1) that Christ is now reigning upon King and (2) that the kingdom of Christ is a present reality, then we can forget about such things as the “tribulation,” the “rapture,” a literal battle of “Armageddon,” and all the other premillennial paraphernalia. Upon these two fundamental issues the whole system stands or falls.

### ***The kingdom of Christ presently exists***

I first call attention to the evidence that the kingdom of Christ was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of the Christ. Between His resurrection and ascension, He continued speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God which he had previously taught (Acts 1:3). If we go back to the time that John the Baptizer began preaching, we see that he was the first to begin preaching, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat. 3:2).<sup>1</sup> After Jesus’ baptism and the wilderness temptations that followed, Jesus also began preaching, “The kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (4:17). Mark’s description of the theme of Jesus’ preaching supplies a fuller meaning of *at hand*: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (1:15). He thus told them that they were living in the time when the kingdom promises and prophecies were going to be fulfilled. When he chose His twelve apostles and sent them on the limited commission, He ordered them to preach, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (10:7). Likewise, when Jesus chose the seventy, He commissioned them to preach, “The kingdom is at hand” (Luke 10:9). The phrase *at hand* never refers to something in the past, nor does it ever refer to something in the distant future. Rather, it necessarily refers to something nearby, near enough to reach out and touch in the case of an object. Concerning an event, the reference invariably means that which is soon to come to pass. The kingdom was soon to come into existence.

Further, Jesus on one occasion said in the presence of the apostles, “There are some here of them that stand by who shall in no wise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). In the great promises to the apostles, He said, “I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 16:18–19). Notice that the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” were going to precisely fit the door of the church Jesus was planning to build. The church and the kingdom of Christ on earth are one and the same thing. He didn’t change subjects in these promises. He probably didn’t even draw a breath between the statements of verses 18 and 19.

As already noted, Jesus promised that the kingdom would “come with power” (Mark 9:1). In His last post-resurrection meeting with the apostles before His ascension, the Lord

instructed them to remain in Jerusalem for “the promise of the Father,” which He identified as their being “baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:4–5). In the same conversation, Jesus promised that their baptism in the Holy Spirit would come with “power” (v. 8).

Note the following summary of facts thus far: The kingdom would come with power in the lifetime of some of the apostles (Mark 9:1). The apostles’ baptism in the Holy Spirit was to come with a manifestation of power (Acts 1:8). Thus if we can determine when this manifestation of power from the Holy Spirit occurred, we can learn when the kingdom began. Further, since the church Jesus promised to build is another designation for the kingdom, this power-filled event will mark the time of the church’s beginning.

The apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost Day following the Lord’s resurrection and ascension, as determined by the following: Acts 2 begins: “And when the day of Pentecost was now come....” Luke then describes the manifestations of awe-inspiring and amazing power that occurred:

1. A sudden sound from heaven like the “rushing of a mighty wind
2. Flame-like displays that appeared upon each of the apostles
3. The ability of the apostles to speak in languages they had never studied to the great confusion and amazement of the several linguistic groups from many nations gathered for Pentecost (vv.2–11)

Peter, with the eleven other apostles, then began explaining the phenomena the multitude had witnessed and that the apostles had experienced. He quoted Joel’s 8<sup>th</sup>-century B.C. prophecy regarding a massive outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the “last days” (2:16–21), stating, “this is that.” This event is the very one for which the risen Lord had instructed the apostles to wait in Jerusalem, as noted above.

Peter proceeded to declare Jesus, whom they had crucified, as the Christ – proved such both by the incomparable array of miraculous deeds He performed among them and by the fulfillment of various prophecies (Acts 2:22–31). When Peter declared that Jesus’ Sonship and Christhood were further certified by His resurrection, ascension, and enthronement (vv. 32–36), some were so guilt-smitten that they asked of the apostles, “What shall we do?” (v. 37). To their earnest plea, Peter uttered the age-lasting remedy: “Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38). After Peter further preached and exhorted at some length, “about 3,000 souls”

obeyed the inspired commands, were baptized, and were “added unto them in that day” (vv. 39–41).

Moreover, the Lord not only added the 3,000 on that great Pentecost Day, but He also continued adding “to them” (i.e., “the church,” KJV) daily as others were/are likewise saved upon their confessed faith in the Christ, repentance of their sins, and baptism that brings salvation (2:47). While *church* (*ekklesia*) does not appear in the Greek text in verse 47, it is so clearly and certainly implied as to be beyond doubt that the church is that to which *them* refers as the depository of those thus forgiven of their past sins and saved. The 3,000 of Pentecost soon increased to “about 5,000” men, whom Luke described as those who heard and believed the word (4:4). He next referred to this group of several thousand as “the church” (5:11). It was therefore this very group—the church—to which the Lord began adding saved souls on Pentecost. The wording of verse 47 demands the conclusion that the Lord adds to His church **only** those who have received the promised salvation (i.e., remission/forgiveness of sins). This inevitable conclusion means also that one who is thus saved by Scriptural definition cannot remain outside of the church—salvation and the church of Christ are inseparable

In Acts 2:41–47 (and subsequent passages) the Bible refers to the church as an **existing** reality. While its establishment was but a promise in Matthew 16:18, from Pentecost forward the Lord has added people to it as they are saved. We have seen that this beginning of the church is on the same day that the apostles received Holy Spirit baptism with its amazing power—the power that was to accompany the kingdom’s coming, as previously cited, but now quoted: “And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). Nor should we forget that in the same breath in which Jesus promised to build His church, He referred to it as “the kingdom of heaven” and vowed to give its entrance “keys” to Peter. It thus must follow that the point at which the church was established is likewise when the Lord’s kingdom on earth began. The “keys” of entrance Jesus gave to Peter are seen in his command to the guilt-ridden believers on Pentecost: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The kingdom is not still “at hand” as premillennialists believe and argue. If it did not come soon after the time that John, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy began saying it was soon to come, then the whole lot of them were false prophets. Almost 2,000 years distant from

Pentecost until however long it will be until the Lord comes again is not “at hand” by anyone’s definition. Moreover, if the kingdom was not established **during the lifetime** of some of the apostles, we have only three possibilities for explaining this matter – all unacceptable:

1. Some of the apostles are still living. Jesus said, “some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death” before they would “see the kingdom come with power.” Only one not in his right mind would thus aver.
2. Jesus was honest in promising the soon coming of the kingdom, but He was simply mistaken. How can He be the Savior if He thus erred, regardless of how honest and sincere he was in thus promising?
3. Jesus knew the kingdom was not coming soon, but He nevertheless said that it was to attract attention or for some other reason. Such would make Him a false prophet by intent rather than by accident. Who can believe in that kind of Christ, either?

The truth is that the kingdom came when Jesus said it would come, and the day of Pentecost marks the time when it came into existence.

When Philip went to Samaria and preached “the good tidings concerning the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12), he markedly did not preach, “The kingdom is at hand.” Apparently, his message included, as Peter’s did on Pentecost, the means by which they could become citizens therein. Peter commanded those who believed the Pentecost message to be baptized, whereupon they were saved and added to the church (2:37–38, 41, 47). Those in Samaria who believed were also baptized at Philip’s preaching (8:12). As earlier noted, the Lord equated His church with “the kingdom of heaven” when He promised to build it (Mat. 16:18–19). That the church of Christ and the earthly phase of the kingdom of Heaven are one and the same explains why Paul some years later reminded **members of the Colossian church** that they had been “**translated into the kingdom**” (Col. 1:2, 13). They were not **waiting for the kingdom**; they were **in the kingdom**. Thus, upon the same conditions that the Lord saves and adds people to His church, He bestows upon them citizenship in His kingdom – because they are one and the same. We indeed await the **future heavenly/eternal state** of the kingdom, but to deny its earthly existence from Pentecost forward is to deny an unarguable fundamental fact of history and of Scripture.

The saints addressed in the Hebrews epistle are described as “the church” (12:23), and in the same context the inspired writer stated that those brethren had received “a kingdom which cannot be shaken” (v. 28). They were not **looking** for a kingdom; they had **found** it and **received** it. John declared to those in the seven churches of Asia that he was their “...brother and

partaker” with them “in the tribulation and kingdom...which are in Jesus...” (Rev. I :9). Thus the very book (Revelation) that the premillennialists claim as the principal source for much of their heinous system of theology utterly refutes their future-kingdom assertion.

### ***Jesus Christ is presently reigning as king upon His throne***

The premillennial contention that the kingdom of Christ has not been established and will not be until He returns in the clouds carries the following significant implication: If He has no kingdom, He also has no throne, and He is not now reigning. But what saith the Scripture? Particularly, what did Peter preach regarding this subject on Pentecost?

That Jesus Christ is now king and that He is now reigning is a prominent theme in Peter’s Pentecost sermon. He began by declaring that God raised Jesus, the very One they had crucified, from the dead (vv. 22–24). He then quoted from David (Psa. 16), who, Peter said, spoke not of himself in those words, particularly in the following: “Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27). The apostle then reminded the people that the tomb containing David’s bones was still intact in Jerusalem and stated that David’s words were thus prophetic (vv. 29–30a).

Peter then declared that David’s psalm-prophecy referred to the heir whom God, through Nathan, had promised to set upon the king’s throne (2 Sam. 7:12–13; cf. 1 Chr. 11–12). The apostle then applied David’s prophecy to the Lord’s resurrection even as the 16th Psalm did (Acts 2:31–32). But this promise delivered by Nathan to David was not only a promise of Christ’s resurrection. It was also a prophecy of his exaltation (v. 33), but exaltation to what? Three things are identified in the context:

1. Exaltation to David’s throne, as indicated by the reference to Nathan’s God-inspired promise to the king (vv. 30–31)
2. Exaltation to the right hand of the Father (vv. 33–34)
3. Exaltation to be both Lord and Christ (v. 36)

All three of these declarations refer to the **coronation** and **enthronement** of our Lord at his ascension to the Father. The throne to which Jesus was exalted was David’s throne, Peter says. Note the location of that throne: It is not upon the earth, but “by the right hand of the God” in Heaven. Thus Jesus now sits upon the throne that God promised to a son of David, which throne was/is removed from the earth and does not relate to a material, earthly kingdom; it refers to God’s spiritual kingdom, the church of Christ. We do not wait for Him to

be placed on David's old literal perishable throne to rule over a literal perishable kingdom that will last only a literal 1,000 years.

That throne is symbolic of the complete authority the Father gave to His Son, to which Jesus alluded in His Great Commission to the apostles: "All authority hath been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Mat. 28: 18). Christ **now** reigns over His kingdom that shall stand forever and ever, not a mere 1,000 years (Dan. 2:44). If the kingdom has not yet been established, then over what has Christ been reigning since His ascension to David's heavenly throne? If the reign of Christ is still unrealized, Paul was grossly mistaken to identify Him, only a few years after Pentecost, as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of Lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; cf. Rev. 19:16). Acts 2 (with related passages) powerfully affirms that Christ was enthroned as king upon His ascension and that He built His church/established His kingdom on the Day of Pentecost.

That Christ was enthroned upon His ascension and that the kingdom was established in the events of Pentecost delivers an unanswerable blow to two of the most fundamental tenets of premillennial dogma, namely that both the enthronement of Christ and the beginning of His kingdom are yet future.

Those today who are looking for Christ to set up a literal 1,000-year reign/kingdom on earth when He returns must have at least three "comings" of Christ in their doctrinal scheme. His "first coming" is His birth of Mary, conceived of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:30-35). His "second coming" is for their contrived "rapture." There must then be a "third coming" of the Lord to establish His kingdom and restore David's old throne (or, perhaps this "third coming" is a "second, second coming"). However they may describe it, the premillennial program has too many "comings" of Christ to fit the teachings of the prophets of both Old and New Testaments, including Jesus' own words. Those who are looking for Him to set up a literal, temporal, political kingdom on this earth when He returns are going to be just as disappointed as the first-century Jews were when they were expecting their Messiah to so act. God never had in mind such a kingdom for His only begotten Son, the son of David. The old literal kingdom of David was but a type and shadow of Christ's spiritual kingdom, the church. To connect Christ with a restored literal earthly kingdom yet to come, while denying that the church is that kingdom, is to exalt the type over the anti-type.

The church of our Lord is not a substitute, Divine afterthought, or emergency plan that God scrambled to provide when the Jews "surprised" God (imagine the implications of that!)

and rejected His Son and His kingdom. Haven't the premillennialists ever read Isaiah 53, wherein seven centuries before His Son came, God had Isaiah to declare that men would despise and reject Him when He came among them? Our omniscient Creator knew that men would reject His Son, but that this would not – and did not – prevent or delay the establishment of His kingdom, the church. It came right on schedule, “when the fullness of the time came” (Gal. 4:4)

### **Crossroadsism**

What is “Crossroadsism”? It is named for its source – the Crossroads Church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida, which has spawned a particular type of evangelistic philosophy. I know that no one reading these words would disagree with a strong emphasis on evangelism. They need to repent if they would. But the problem is that their approach to evangelism demands that their own humanly devised methodology be followed scrupulously and rigidly. Moreover, they also have a special code of personal behavior for each of their “disciples” that must be followed without exception or variation. They enforce these dogmas by a powerful system of cultic psychological manipulation, pressures, and tactics. This approach to evangelism and this “philosophy,” as it has been called, has divided numerous families and congregations of the Lord's people from coast to coast and even in other nations.

Why should we have to deal with such a thing that is so obviously and patently destructive? We must do so for the same reason we have to deal with premillennialism, instrumental music in worship, or any other destructive system of doctrine or practice. In the first place, some brethren don't believe what they see and hear. In the second place, some people refuse to see and hear plainly stated warnings. They think there is something especially evil about anybody who gives a “bad report” about any person, practice, or congregation, regardless of the evil fruit or the error involved in the practice or doctrine. Crossroadsism and the “trail of tears” in its wake have been rather thoroughly documented and exposed in various journals and in several lectureships in recent years. Nevertheless, some brethren, though not actual advocates or apologists for Crossroadsism, are determined to excuse and ignore the plainest evidence of its malfeasance. Accordingly, some congregations have let it creep in “right under their noses” because they ignored or remained steadfastly ignorant of the warnings.

In the next few pages, I will address some of the principal procedures for which the Crossroads philosophy has become known and put them to the test by material in the first few chapters of the book of Acts.



### ***The total commitment philosophy***

The Crossroads program demands what they call “total commitment.” The Lord also demands total commitment of His disciples (Luke 9:23), so what is the problem? The “total commitment” of the Crossroads leadership is to a man and to a human program instead of to Christ the Son of God and His Word. Chuck Lucas was the man at the peak of this religious pyramid for several years. He fell from favor with the elders at the Crossroads church for “undisclosed sins” and was dismissed in 1985. The control center has seemingly shifted to Boston, Massachusetts, and to Kip McKean, a Chuck Lucas disciple. The philosophy of “total commitment” centers in one man who demands unquestioning control of those who enter their program. This program amounts to mind/psychological control that gives the leaders the power over the most personal and intimate details of the “disciple’s” decisions and life.

The early church most certainly preached and practiced “total commitment,” as the early chapters of Acts indicate in some detail. This dedication was a principal reason for the Gospel’s amazing spread throughout the Roman empire in only a few decades’ time after Pentecost. The apostles took the lead in their “total commitment” to their Savior as we see them arrested, imprisoned, threatened, beaten, and ordered to cease their preaching by the Sanhedrin Court (Acts 4:1–4, 17–20; 5:17–19, 26–28; 33, 40). The apostles defiantly responded by announcing, “We must obey God rather than men” and ceased not to preach the Word (5:29, 42). Steven’s total commitment cost him his life (7:59–60). Such utter dedication in these men inspired the same in their brethren in general who shared willingly their possessions and property with those in need (4:32–37). Though Saul of Tarsus unleashed a purge of persecution against the saints resulting in imprisonment and flight from Jerusalem, we do not read of those who renounced their faithfulness to their Master (8:1–4). Acts 9 introduces us to the means by which Saul the persecutor became Paul the persecuted, whose commitment to the Lord was so full that it is legendary.

Let us, brethren, not be frightened away from preaching and practicing “total commitment” as the Bible teaches it because some have egregiously abused the concept and the term. Rather, we must continue to insist upon it—first from ourselves, and then from those who hear us. It must ever be, however a dedication to the will of God through His Son (Mat. 7:21), not to any human being or human system.

The Crossroads practice is to give love and support, bestow an abundance of hugs and kisses, and give help to one—as long as he “marches to their drum beat.” But if one does not march in lockstep with their humanly devised rules, he or she is shunned until that one gets back in line. That is not the way the early church behaved. Rather, they possessed the wonderful spirit of helpfulness and care whereby they were all together with one heart and one soul and had all things common (Acts 2:44; 4:32).

### *The message they preach*

What is the Crossroads message? Some of their defenders say that they “preach Christ” instead of “the church and doctrine.” The early church indeed preached Christ. Acts 8 states twice that Philip “preached Christ” in Samaria (vv. 5, 35). It is evident, though not expressly stated, that Peter also “preached Christ” on Pentecost—a sermon that included the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of our Lord (Acts 2:22–36). Further, “preaching Christ” included declaration of His authority (“name”), and the requirements of repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). It included preaching about the kingdom (Acts 2:30–35), which was a part of Philip’s “preaching Christ” (8:12). Later, when Philip “preached Jesus” to the Ethiopian as they travelled on the Gaza road, he learned enough from the instruction to request baptism at the first opportunity (8:35–40). All these subjects might well be labeled “church doctrines” by the Crossroads defenders. Truly, one cannot “preach Christ” without preaching “church doctrine.” They are part and parcel of each other, and no man dare pull them apart, whether he be Billy Graham or the Crossroads heretics.

### *Their approach to sinners*

The Crossroads folks admit to trying to “sneak up” on the sinner. I don’t know if they use this terminology, but their tactics amount to the same thing. They want to get the person into the water and the church before he fully understands what he or she is doing. This is the reason they preach “Christ” as they do instead of “doctrine and the church.” “Preaching doctrine and the church will turn them off; just preach ‘Jesus.’ Leave that doctrine and church business alone! You can deal with those things later.”

Contrast the following with the foregoing approach: The early preachers five times between Acts 2:23 and 7:52 told the Jews to their faces that they murdered Jesus. Now that is the way to “slip up” on sinners! I have never had to stand eye-to-eye and toe-to-toe with anyone and tell him or her they murdered someone. The apostles did not hesitate to do so. They also

forthrightly commanded repentance and baptism (2:38, et al.). There was not much subtlety in Stephen's remarks to the Sanhedrin: "Ye stiffnecked and circumcised in heart and in ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye: (8:51). Peter plainly preached to the assemblage at Cornelius' house that the Christ would be their judge (Acts 10:42). Brethren in the early church didn't believe in "slipping up" on sinners.

Some who would not even be sympathizers with Crossroads' tactics have nonetheless adopted this approach to evangelism, and it needs to be exposed, whoever may employ it. It is not in the spirit of the Gospel to try to "convert" them without their knowing they were being "converted." Yes, we need to be tactful, and there is no Scriptural justification for meanness or deliberate unkindness, but at the same time we must preach and teach the Gospel plainly and boldly. To get people into the baptistery without their understanding such things as the meaning of repentance, the exclusive nature of the church, what constitutes Scriptural worship, and that all that we do and say must be by Jesus' authority does little good either for them or for the church Jesus built and bought. The root of much of the apostasy abroad in the church very likely stems from folk who were baptized, believing the church of Christ is but one among the multitude of denominations. We must teach people the Gospel, that they must obey the Gospel, and that the Lord will add them to His one church upon their obedience to the Gospel.

### ***The Crossroads prayer-partner scheme***

One of the major control methods this movement employs is what they call "prayer partners," wherein a "senior" prayer partner is assigned to every new convert to whom he or she must confess one's most intimate sins, even sins of thought. It should be obvious that this one-way "confessional" makes the "junior" partner completely psychologically vulnerable and dependent upon the "senior" partner. We surely see the early church busy in prayer, but in no such operation as the foregoing. Many passages describe their great reliance upon prayer. From the beginning, they "continued steadfastly in prayer" (Acts 2:42). As soon as Peter and John were released after their arrest by the Sanhedrin they met with the brethren and prayed (4:24). When the seven brethren were chosen to serve the tables, the church engaged in prayer (6:4). On two occasions Luke records the fact that Peter prayed alone (9:40; 10:9). We see in these passages a simple picture of and dependence upon prayer, either by an assembly of brethren or by individuals, wherein they are pouring out their hearts to God. There is no high-handed human scheme involved for gaining and enforcing psychological control of master over slave, as the prayer partner practice is.

### *The elitist structure of Crossroads practitioners*

The Crossroads approach fosters a spirit of elitism and unscriptural exclusivism within the church. In some respects, this attitude parallels the Gnosticism of the first and second centuries. Those old Gnostics considered themselves spiritually superior with “inside information” on spiritual matters that they alone possessed, which created a faction within the church of those times. The Crossroads leaders are doing much the same thing, at least in effect. The Jerusalem church surely had some who were far more informed and spiritually mature than the newest converts (e.g., the apostles, the seven men chosen to serve the Grecian widows, et al.). The same has also been and will continue to be true in every congregation through the centuries. However, no elitism or display of superiority is evident, rather, they were all together, and they had all things common and were all of one heart and soul (Acts 2:44; 4:32). There were no cliques or special groups in the congregations. The Jews sought to create one to preserve observance of at least parts of the Mosaic Law, but the apostles exposed, opposed, and defeated it. Upon the first sign that some group in the church was being neglected, the apostles immediately corrected it (6:1–6).

### *The primary targets of Crossroads operatives*

The Crossroads people go mainly after the young people, and they are principally the ones attracted. There is admittedly a shrewdness in this strategy on their part. Young people are generally more vulnerable because they are not mature in the faith and because they are usually more easily swayed emotionally than older people are. What was the “strategy” of the early church? They preached the Gospel to every class, every age, and eventually to every race—without distinction. The Lord’s Great Commission ordered the apostles (and by extension, all who would obey the Gospel) to preach the Gospel to “all nations” and to “the whole creation” (Mat. 28:18; Mark 16:15). In His last words to the apostles before disappearing in the clouds, Jesus said, “...and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The first eleven chapters of Acts reveal that they and those whom they converted in the eight to ten years beginning with Pentecost preached the Word indiscriminately. Those who heard the Gospel included pilgrims from multiple nations, civil rulers, Jewish priests, murderous religious leaders, a sorcerer, a foreign ranking governmental official, a leader of organized persecution, and Roman soldiers. This wide variety of hearers included men and women, those who had much and those who were impoverished, and Jews and Gentiles.

Inspired preachers and prophets did not think or act in terms of “targeting” certain segments of people, whether by race, sex, or age; neither should we.

### ***Baptism and the Crossroads Movement***

Crossroads advocates preach and practice what they call “lordship baptism” regarding those who have already been Scripturally baptized, but who were not baptized by them. These include both new converts and those who may have been Scripturally baptized fifty years earlier. Crossroads leaders insist that unless they have had the chance to “disciple” these who were baptized into Christ earlier, they cannot possibly truly understand what it means to be a “disciple” or submit to the Lord. They thereby erect a false distinction between *disciple* and *Christian*. They conveniently ignore Luke’s declaration concerning the saints in Antioch: “...The **disciples** were called **Christians** first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26b, *emph. DM*). Crossroads leaders would have it read this way: “The Christians were disciples only after we indoctrinated them.” In this part of their creed we again see their elitism, discussed earlier, in full display. Inspired Scripture identifies a disciple as a Christian and vice versa. The purpose their practice of “lordship baptism” is to bring people under their control and into their cult—their faction within the church. By this means they separate their converts and add people to their subversive group within local congregations.

Did the early preachers preach and administer “lordship baptism”? Yes, but certainly not after the fashion of the Crossroads promoters. The apostles commanded the people on Pentecost to be baptized in the name of (i.e., by the authority of) Jesus Christ for/unto the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Later, Peter likewise commanded those gathered in Cornelius’ house “to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (10:48). Among the countless times the New Testament identifies Jesus Christ by the term *Lord* is Peter’s striking statement immediately preceding his *baptism* command to the Pentecostians: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both **Lord** and **Christ**, this **Jesus** whom ye crucified” (2:36, *emph. DM*). While the words, *lordship baptism*, are not found in Scripture, they are not anti-Scriptural, **if they are used to simply indicate that the immersion being performed is authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ**. Ironically, Crossroads doctrine and practice of “lordship baptism” **denies** the authority of the Lord, for He has not authorized either.

### ***Crossroads and liberalism***

The “evangelism seminars” conducted annually by the Crossroads church feature some of the most doctrinally soft, unsound, and liberal members of the church year after year. The

apostles were concerned about the faithfulness of men in leadership positions in the Jerusalem church. Of the seven men chosen to care for the Grecian widows, Steven and Philip distinguished themselves as evangelists. The qualifications of these men included being of “good report and of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3). The Crossroads church consistently uses men who fail on all three counts. Faithful brethren who organize and direct lectureships do their utmost to invite only speakers whom we know will preach and defend only the Truth. Although we occasionally get a surprise or two, these are exceptions. We do not carelessly or intentionally invite men known even to be questionable, let alone blatantly liberal in their doctrine and/or practice. We have had some speakers on our Annual Denton Lectures that will not be invited back unless we know they have made some changes. We have also had to rescind invitations because of factors of which we learned after the invitation was extended. In one case the invitee had already submitted his manuscript. It is not enjoyable to do such, but concern for faithfulness to God’s Word demands it.

When a college or church repeatedly invites compromising or liberal men to speak on their lectureships or for other teaching or preaching assignments, it is advertising its agreement with and support of compromise and liberalism. Such is the case with the Crossroads church and its evangelism seminars, in which they provide large crowds (unfortunately) of unsuspecting sheep (composed mostly of college-age young people) for the ravening wolves to devour. The early preachers preached a message that was distinctive, certain, and sound. It was a message that glorified the Lord, the Truth, and the church of Christ instead of ridiculing all these things, which these unsound and liberal preachers frequently do.

### *Crossroads as “Weight Watchers”*

Believe it or not, the Crossroads counsellors and “senior” prayer partners (in some cases, at least) demand of their new converts that they trim their weight down to a certain poundage or their waistline to a certain number of inches. The disciple is not “totally committed” unless he/she complies. Likely, readers of these words are glad that this is not a requirement of Scripture, otherwise the “commitment” of some of might appear not to be quite “total.” While the early preachers never encouraged gluttony, they also never concerned themselves with such mundane and relatively insignificant matters as proofs of one’s “total commitment” to the Lord. Barnabas and others even encouraged some brethren to gain weight and enlarge their waistlines; they gave money to the apostles to provide food for brethren, thus enabling and encouraging those who needed it to eat more (Acts 4:34–37). The seven brethren mentioned

earlier also encouraged weight gain as they distributed food to the neglected widows. Such *Weight-Watcher* requirements are totally out of harmony with both the spirit and the letter of the Gospel.

### **Conclusion**

It is a cause for weeping that we continue have those among us who cannot be content with the Gospel of Christ, but must adopt human theories and philosophies, two of which we have discussed in this MSS. Such are not content to abide in that “old Jerusalem gospel” that began to be sounded out on Pentecost and that all faithful disciples love so dearly. If men were thus content, such heresies would never have been thought of, much less propounded to disturb the church. But we must do more than just weep; we must raise our voices, stand up, and cry out against, and refute such perversions (2 Tim. 4:1–4). We must also mark, avoid, and withdraw from those who are determined to walk in these erroneous ways (Rom. 16:17–18; 2 The. 3:6).

### **Endnote**

1. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

[**Note:** I wrote this MS for and presented a digest of it orally at the Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, hosted by the Knight Arnold Church of Christ, Memphis, TN, March 25–29, 1984. It was published in the book of the lectures, *The Book of Acts – Volume 1*, ed. Curtis A. Cates (Memphis, TN: Memphis School of Preaching, 1987).]

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