

The Difference Is:

by Bill Crews

What **difference** did it make whether Noah made the ark out of gopher wood or some other kind of wood? The **difference** is that God said, *"Make thee an ark of gopher wood"* (Genesis 6: 16). God also specified the dimensions and the number of levels (floors or stories).

What **difference** did it make whether Moses, in the wilderness of Zin, spoke to the rock or struck the rock? -- after all, years before, at a place called Rephidim (Exodus 17), he had struck a rock (as God had told him to), and water came out then, just as it did now. The **difference** is that God said, *"Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes"* (Numbers 20:7), and Moses was charged with sin on the occasion (he chose to strike the rock).

What **difference** does it make whether one, in being baptized, has some water sprinkled or poured out upon his head or has his entire body immersed in water? The **difference** is that the word of God says, *"We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:4; see also Colossians 2:12; Matthew 3: 16 -- Jesus, after being baptized by John in the Jordan river, came up out of the water -- and Acts 8:35-39 -- when the man from Ethiopia was baptized, he and Philip both went down into the water, he was baptized, then they both came up out of the water).

What **difference** does it make whether we sing with or without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music? The **difference** is that God says, *"Sing"* (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; I Corinthians 14: 15), and no instances of Christians or churches using mechanical instruments of music can be found in the New Testament. God does not say, *"Make music"* or *"play,"* nor does He in any way authorize the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship by Christians in their assemblies.

What **difference** does it make whether we are Catholic Christians, Baptist Christians, Methodist Christians, Presbyterian Christians, Episcopal Christians, Assembly of God Christians, Nazarene Christians, Pentecostal Christians or what? The **difference** is that the Bible informs us that *"the disciples were called Christians"* (Acts 11:26; see also Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16). We have Bible authority for being Christians; we have none for being Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, etc.

What **difference** does it make whether we spread the gospel through a local congregation or through a missionary society supported by local congregations, just so we get the job done? The **difference** is that God has authorized the local congregation and the spreading of the gospel by the local congregation; but he has not authorized the formation and functioning of a human organization such as a missionary society (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 8).

What **difference** does it make whether a church or churches send money directly to a preacher or through another church (such as a "sponsoring church")? The **difference** is that the Scriptures authorize the former, but not the latter; funds from a church or churches were always sent directly to the preacher in need of support (see it in 2 Corinthians 11:8-9 and in Philippians 4:15-17).

What **difference** does it make whether a church or churches send directly to a church with needy members or through another church which has taken upon itself to "sponsor" the needed relief? The **difference** is that the first is found in the New Testament (see it in Acts 11:27-30; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4); Romans 15:25-27; 2 Corinthians 8-9), while the second is not.

What **difference** does it make whether individuals or congregations send donations to colleges, children's homes, homes for unwed mothers, or nursing homes for the infirm and aged? The **difference** is that the Bible supplies no authority for churches to send funds to human organizations of any kind, however worthy they may be. Let individuals take care of such matters. Many [\[continued on page 283704\]](#)