

INTRODUCTION

For those of you who've been around for years, you know my basic preaching plan is to take a book of the Bible and teach through it verse-by-verse. I just completed 51 messages from Hebrews. But I usually interrupt those long series with special messages and series. In 2004 I did a series entitled, "The Gospel According to Country Music." In 2007 I did a series called "The Gospel According to GSPN" comparing the gospel with sports. In 2009 I did a series entitled, "The Gospel According to TV."

Over the next few weeks I'm doing a series called "The Gospel According to the Beatles." I'll be talking a little about the Beatles and a lot about the gospel.

Some say the Beatles are the most popular band in history. So if you think you are a Beatles expert, here are ten Beatles trivia questions. You can use the side of your outline to write down your answer or just answer it in your mind.

1. In what city did the Beatles grow up? *Liverpool.*
2. What year did the Beatles first appear on the Ed Sullivan show? *1964.*
3. What was the Beatles first #1 hit in America? *"I Want to Hold your Hand."*
4. How many #1 songs did the Beatles record? *27*
5. On their appearance on the Ed Sullivan show, what song did the Beatles sing that they had not written? *"Til There was You" (from The Music Man)*
6. How much did a front row seat ticket cost for their first American concert? *\$4*
7. Three of the Beatles had brown eyes, which one had blue eyes? *Ringo.*
8. What was the most popular nickname for the Beatles? *The Fab Four.*
9. What year did the Beatles break up? *1970.*
10. What are the ages of the two living Beatles? *Ringo age 77; Paul, Age 75.*

Over the next few weeks we're going to be looking at three of the Beatles' songs. Today we'll think about the song "Let it Be." It was released in 1970 and was one of the last recordings of the Beatles before they broke up. Before we hear the song, let me give you the story behind the music.

When the Beatles recorded the White Album in 1968, there had been a lot of tension. Arguments had broken out among the four and the constant presence of Yoko Ono with John added another layer of tension. None of the thirty songs on the double album every made it to number one. So it was a difficult time for all the Beatles, especially Paul. In an interview he explained how he received the inspiration for "Let it Be."

"One night, somewhere between deep sleep and insomnia, I had the most comforting dream about my mother, who died when I was only 14. She had been a nurse, my mum, and very hardworking, because she wanted the best for us. We weren't a well-off family—we didn't have a car, we just about had a television—so both of my parents went out to work, and Mum contributed a good half to the family income. At night when she came home, she would cook, so we didn't have a lot of time with each other. But she was just a very comforting presence in

my life. And when she died, one of the difficulties I had, as the years went by, was that I couldn't recall her face so easily. That's how it is for everyone, I think. As each day goes by, you just can't bring their face into your mind, you have to use photographs and reminders like that."

He continues: "So in this dream twelve years later, my mother appeared, and there was her face, completely clear, particularly her eyes, and she said to me very gently, very reassuringly: 'Let it be.'

It was lovely. I woke up with a great feeling. It was really like she had visited me at this very difficult point in my life and gave me this message: Be gentle, don't fight things, just try and go with the flow and it will all work out.

Not very long after the dream, I got together with Linda (to whom he was married for thirty years), which was the saving of me. And it was as if my mum had sent her, you could say.

These days, the song has become almost like a hymn. We sang it at Linda's memorial service. (along with a 700-voice congregation in St. Martin in the fields church in London) And after September 11 the radio played it a lot, which made it the obvious choice for me to sing when I did the benefit concert in New York City. Even before September 11th, people used to lean out of cars and trucks and say, 'Yo, Paul, let it be.'

So those words are really very special to me, because not only did my mum come to me in a dream and reassure me with them at a very difficult time in my life—and sure enough, things did get better after that—but also, in putting them into a song, and recording it with the Beatles, it became a comforting, healing statement for other people too."

When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom
Let it be

And in my hour of darkness
She is standing right in front of me
Speaking words of wisdom
Let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom
Let it be

And when the broken-hearted people
Living in the world agree
There will be an answer
Let it be

For though they may be parted there is
Still a chance that they will see
There will be an answer
Let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Yeah, there will be an answer
Let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be
Whisper words of wisdom
Let it be

And when the night is cloudy
There is still a light that shines on me
Shine until tomorrow
Let it be

I wake up to the sound of music
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom
Let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, yeah, let it be
There will be an answer
Let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, yeah, let it be
There will be an answer
Let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, yeah, let it be.
Whisper words of wisdom
Let it be

Paul mentioned that the song sounded almost like a hymn. He should know, because all four of the Beatles started out in church. John and Ringo were baptized into the Anglican Church as infant and Paul and George were christened in the Catholic Church. But none of them grew up claiming to be Christians.

When I hear the term, "Let it Be," I immediately think about the encounter between the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. Let me retell the story for you.

Mary was a young virgin living in Nazareth. She was engaged to be married to man named Joseph. One night the angel Gabriel appeared to her and she reacted like most people do when

they see an angel. She was terrified. But Gabriel told her, "Mary, don't be afraid. You are blessed and God has great plans for you." He told her she would conceive and give birth to the Son of God and she was to name Him Jesus. Gabriel said, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And God will give him the throne of his father, David and he will rule in kingdom that will never end."

As you can imagine Mary was frightened and confused by this message. She was baffled. She asked Gabriel, "How can this happen? I haven't had sexual relations with a man." The angel said, "The Holy Spirit of God will come upon you and the power of God Almighty will overshadow you. For nothing is impossible for God."

Even though Mary was frightened and confused she surrendered to God's plan. She said, "I am the Lord's servant. LET IT BE done to me as you have spoken."

Mary was submitting to God's plan for her life. But her submission to God also led to God initiating the salvation of the world. There were three powerful forces at work in this conversation between Gabriel and Mary and these are the same three forces at work in personal salvation. Let's examine them.

I. Personal salvation involves the Word of God.

Then the angel told her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus." (Luke 1:30-31 CSB)

God spoke to Mary and He is speaking to us today as well. He isn't using an angel, He is speaking to us through a more-sure word of prophecy, the Bible.

Sometimes people are searching for God and they cry out, "Oh God, if you are real, please speak to me! Give me some kind of sign!" God is speaking clearly to us through His written Word. Do you want to know what He's saying?

He is telling you that He loves you. He knows you are a sinner, but He still loves you. He is telling you that because He is a Holy God, He must punish sin. But He loves you so much that He has sent His son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sins so that we can be totally forgiven. He wants you to have an abundant life now and He wants you to spend eternity with Him in heaven after you die. You ask, "How do you know He is saying that to me?" Listen carefully, "God so loved the world [substitute your name] that He gave His one and only son. That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16 NKJV) Can you get any plainer than that?

II. Personal Salvation Involves the Work of the Spirit.

Mary asked the right question. She didn't ask, "Why me?" She asked, "How is this going to happen?" The angel replied to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." (Luke 1:35 CSB)

When it comes to your personal salvation, a good question to answer is HOW can I be saved? The answer is the same, the work of the Holy Spirit. You can't save yourself. It is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that transforms you from a lost sinner to a saved person. The Bible says, "It is not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy He has saved us by the washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5 NIV) When you trust Christ, the Holy Spirit works in you to bring about a rebirth. That's what it means to be born again. You can't be born again yourself; it is something that only the Holy Spirit of God can do. That's why Jesus said, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:6 NIV) Some of you think salvation is when you can get good enough to save yourself. You can no more save yourself than Mary could have impregnated herself! It is a mysterious work of the Holy Spirit. And third,

III. Personal Salvation Involves the Will of the person.

I love Mary's response to God's plan. The Bible says: Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! LET IT BE to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:38 NKJV)

God wasn't going to force His will on Mary, she had to choose to allow God's plan to occur. God won't save you without your permission. You must believe His Word and surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit and that's your choice. God won't force you to be saved any more than He would have forced Mary to carry the Messiah. God made His offer to Mary and she said, "Let it be." God offers you the gift of salvation, but you don't receive until you say, "Let it be."

When I was a teenager, I enjoyed watching the old TV show "Mission Impossible." At the first of the show, secret agent, Jim Phelps, played by Peter Graves would play a little tape recorder outlining the next mission. The speaker would always say, "Your mission, should you choose to accept it..." I always thought, "Of course, he's going to choose to accept it; we've got 55 minutes left to the program. What are we going to watch if he doesn't accept it?" Truthfully, when God outlines His plan for us He gives us the same option. "Here's my plan should you choose to accept it."

God has given you a great gift. It is your free will. I want to share two powerful truths about your free will:

A. God limits His Omnipotence in the area of our free will.

God really is all-powerful. That means He can do anything. He created everything by His word. He said, "Light: let it be." And there was light. He said, "Earth: let it be!" And it was. He even said, "Man and woman, Let them be!" And they were created. But when God created Adam and Eve He gave them a free will. He could have simply made them to be carbon-based robots that

were under His full and absolute control. If that had been the case, Adam and Eve would still be alive in the Garden of Eden, enjoying paradise. But strange as it may seem to us, God created Adam and Eve with the capacity to make choices independent from His power. He wanted them to choose to love Him and obey Him.

In college I enjoyed learning to do illusions and sleight of hand. I have a friend, David Garrard, who is still doing gospel magic full time. He used to teach me card tricks. I've forgotten most of them, but there is one card trick I can still do that baffles people. I ask you to choose a card and then shuffle it back into the deck as many times as you wish. After going through a bunch of steps to make it seem more complicated than it is, I can produce the card you chose, every time. How? It's called "forcing a card." From the very start, I've already glanced at a card, and there is a simple little technique that I can use so you will pick that card, but you are certain you are choosing it of your own free will. Nope. I'm forcing you to choose it and you won't even know it. That's how some people picture God's will. They think He is forcing us to make certain decisions. In life we think the deck is stacked, or the outcome is already determined but it's not. When you think about it, it was a pretty risky thing for God to do to create us with this thing called free will. It's the only area of the Universe where He has voluntarily restricted His power to rule.

B. For God to accomplish His plan for us we must surrender to His will.

When Mary heard God's proposal, she said, "Let it be." She was surrendering her will to God's will. We could get into a deep theological debate about whether or not Mary had any choice in this matter. Some would remove her freedom of choice and say that God ordained to be so, and it was so Mary had no choice in the matter. I disagree. God created people and empowered them with the ability to make choices. Throughout the Bible, people make choices, good choices that have good consequences and rotten choices that have painful consequences.

When Jesus prayed in the Garden the night before the cross He struggled with God's Will. It was God's will for Him to drink the bitter cup of suffering. Jesus prayed, "Father, if it is possible take this cup away from me." He prayed that three times, and each time He said, "Not my will, but yours be done." That's what it means to surrender to God's Will. Jesus was saying, "Let it be, Father."

CONCLUSION

One of the lines in the song, "Let it Be" says, "And when the brokenhearted people living in the world agree; there will be an answer, Let it be. And though they may be parted there is still a chance that they will see; there will be an answer, let it be."

Although Paul, Ringo, George, and John all were baptized as babies, I'm afraid they never found the answer. Only one person every claimed He came to heal the broken-hearted—that was Jesus. And He is the answer. God is not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance. But He won't force you to be saved.

In 1829, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt with an unusual case. George Wilson was a federal prisoner convicted of mail robbery and murder. President Andrew Jackson offered George Wilson a full presidential pardon. George Wilson refused it. The president said, "You don't have any choice you are a free man." George Wilson refused. It went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court and they made a landmark ruling. Chief Justice John Marshall wrote, "A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon the acceptance of the person implicated. It is hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it refused, it is no pardon." And George Wilson was hanged. Jesus is offering you forgiveness, peace and a full pardon from your sins. Will you say, "Yes, Lord, Let it be"?

OUTLINE

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II. The Work of the Spirit.

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III. The Will of the person.

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B. For God to accomplish His plan for us we must surrender to His will.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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