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EDITORIAL

Some Things That Baptism Will Do

Baptism is a Bible subject. It is one that has been greatly misunderstood and misrepresented. Much false teaching has sprung up around it. As a result the majority reject it as set forth in the scripture. This is tragic since it is so simple and so necessary to man's salvation.

There are a number of things that baptism will not do; but at this time we are going to go to the Bible and list some of the things that baptism will do. Please note carefully that this is what the scriptures teach concerning this all important subject.

Baptism saves. The Apostle Peter wrote, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21). In the context Peter was pointing out the fact that in Noah's time eight souls were saved by water. He concluded that in like figure, or in a similar way, baptism saves us today. Now how were those eight people saved by water? They were saved by obeying

God, building the ark, entering the ark, and then when the Lord sent the flood it destroyed all of the disobedient, but same water bore up the ark to the salvation of those inside it. Likewise, when we comply with the Lord's wishes and obey his teachings, we finally come to the command of baptism, and through baptism we are saved. Baptism is not a means of taking a bath to cleanse our physical bodies, but through obedience we comply with the Lord's wishes by being baptized. Thus we are saved and we have our sins washed away. This produces a good conscience, based on the fact that we have obeyed the Lord, and in return he saves us. All of this has been made possible by the resurrection of Christ and it is through baptism that we are buried in water and are resurrected from it to walk in newness of life.

2. Christ said that baptism saves only after complying with other conditions. Nowhere does the Bible teach that baptism *only* saves, but it does teach that when one hears the gospel, and believes it (which includes believing in Christ and doing all the things that he would have one to do), then baptism saves. Listen to the words of Christ, when he said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15,16). To reject these words is to reject Christ himself. To fail to comply with them means that one cannot be saved.

3. Baptism remits sins. This again is dependent on hearing the word of the Lord, believing in him, repenting of sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized according to his teaching. On the day of Pentecost, after Peter and the apostles had preached the gospel to a large number of people, and after some three thousand of them had become believers and wanted to know what they should do to be saved, then Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). Then we read, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls," (Acts 2:39,40).

4. Baptism washes away sins. After the Lord had appeared to Saul and told him to go into the city where he would be told what he should do, the record says that Saul was blind for three days, was fasting and praying, and then a gospel preacher by the name of Ananias came unto him and said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). Now did baptism alone wash away Saul's sins? Was there any power in the water itself? Did Saul look to the water as his saviour? Certainly not is the answer to each one of these questions. Christ was the saviour, and was ready to save him, and did save him when he complied with his will. Why was Saul asked to be baptized? Because the Lord had chosen this act to test one's faith and picture his own death, burial, and resurrection. But how could baptism wash away sins? Christ, of course, was the saviour and used water to wash away his sins when he obeyed his commands. That is, Christ was willing to forgive him, or to wash away his sins by his blood, as he came into contact with that blood through the act of obedience. The same obedience today through the act of baptism will produce the same results as it did then.

5. It is through baptism that one is born again. Christ said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3). To further explain, he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). Peter said, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (I Peter 1:23). In the context it is pointed out that the Spirit gave the word, and as one is directed by the word is led to be immersed in water or to be baptized (Acts 8:38,39), and in so doing he is born of water and of the Spirit. Again, Christ said that one must be born of water and of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God. The kingdom that he was speaking of here was the church that was to be established (Matthew 16:18,19), and was established (Colossians 1), and continues to exist even to this day. (Hebrews 12:28). But how did one become a member of the kingdom or church? There was just one way to enter it and that was through obedience to the Lord in baptism as

recorded in Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12:13. Being born again also meant becoming a new creature and that one enters Christ and his church through baptism. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatian 3:26,27).

6. Baptism makes it possible for one to have the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the non-miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit. Peter told a group of believers on the day of Pentecost that if they would repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ that they would receive the remission of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38). Without baptism one cannot receive the Spirit of God.

7. Baptism puts one into Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-5). He also said, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatian 3:26,27). These are the only two passages of scripture in the word of God that tell us how one enters Christ. As you can see, it is not through faith, repentance, prayer, or a hundred other ways that one enters Christ, but it is through the act of baptism. The baptism here is identified as being one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), a burial (Colossians 2:12), a burial in water (Acts 8:38,39), and that is done in obedience to the Lord's command. (Mark 16:15,16). This means then that if one has not been scripturally baptized, one is not in Christ since there is no other way to enter Christ. One may claim to be saved, to be a Christian, a member of the church, to have the Holy Spirit, and so on, but if he has not been scripturally baptized then he is not in Christ, and therefore he is deceived and lost. Please take a close look at what the Bible says to see if you have complied with the Lord's teaching on this subject.

8. Baptism puts one into the Lord's church. We have already mentioned this in connection with Christ's statements concerning the new birth. Paul supports this by saying, "For by one Spi

are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). You will note that he says that we are baptized into one body. In Ephesians 4:4 he declares again that there is but one body. But what is the body here? In Colossians 1:18 he identifies the body as the church, and in Ephesians 1:22,23 he says that the church is the body. So if there is but one body and it is the church then that means that there is but one church. Again, if we are baptized into the body, and the body is the church, then that means that we are baptized into the church. But which church? There is but one and it belongs to Christ. (Matthew 16:18). It wears the name of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 16:16). If you have not been scripturally baptized then you are not in the Lord's church and if you are not in the church then you are lost because the Bible tells us that when one obeys him in baptism, then the Lord saves that individual and adds him to his church. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47).

9. In scriptural baptism one pictures the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in his obedience. The Bible tells us that Christ died on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and then was resurrected from the grave. Now what act could man perform that would portray the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection for all men to see? When we turn to Romans 6 we read these words: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore

reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." (Romans 6:3-12). In this lengthy statement, the inspired man of God makes it clear that in obeying the Lord one dies to his sins, is buried with the Lord in the waters of baptism, and is brought forth or resurrected from that watery grave as a new creature in Christ. Therefore, the significance of baptism is seen in that it helps one in obedience to picture the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Not only is the individual following the Lord's plan in his obedience, but all who are present to witness his obedience can see the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection symbolically re-enacted through his actions. He is telling the world through his obedience that he believes in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Without scriptural baptism this cannot be done. Therefore, this is another reason why we must comply with the Lord's teaching on baptism.

My friend, have you been scripturally baptized? As you can see, baptism does all of this for the believer. If you have rejected baptism then you have rejected Christ because the Lord himself commanded it. If you have not been baptized according to God's will then you are lost. You are therefore being urged to go to the scriptures and study the matter of baptism until you understand what the will of the Lord is concerning that subject. Please forget about what man says, teaches, and does regarding baptism and make up your mind that you are going to do only what the Lord wants you to do. If you will then surely you will be scripturally baptized.



**associate
editorial**

You Can Be Just A Christian And A Member Of The Lord's Church

In the New Testament of the Bible we read of the Christians

For instance, at Acts 11:26 we read: "...And the disciples were called Christians, 'First in Antioch.'" The Apostle Peter said, But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:16). Nowhere, however, in God's word do we read of Methodist Christians or Baptist Christians or Pentecostal Christians, etc., etc.

Likewise, in the Bible's New Testament we read of the church of Christ or the Lord's church. Christ said, before the establishment of the church, "I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH." (Matthew 16:18). At Matthew 6:10 he asked his disciples to pray for the coming or establishment of God's kingdom. And then at Mark 9:1 he told them that some of them would not taste death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. At another place in his conversation with his disciples, in Matthew 16:18,19, he made it clear that the church he was going to establish and the kingdom which would come are the same institution. Thus, when the promised power came, on the day of Pentecost, after his death and resurrection, the kingdom or the church was established. (Acts 1:1-8; Acts 2). Therefore, in Acts 2, where we read of the conversion of 3000 men, it states, after they were baptized for the forgiveness of sins they were added unto the number of the twelve Apostles. Reading on as we come at the last verse of this chapter, we read: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

From this we conclude then that even today when people believe in Christ, and repent, and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins, then the Lord himself adds them to the church. Thus, when I was baptized I did not become a member of any denominational church as Presbyterian, Lutheran or Anglican, etc., etc., but the Lord added me to his church, the church of Christ. The disciples or the members of the Lord's church in the beginning were called Christians (Acts 11:26), so I know that I am a Christian only, nothing more and nothing less.

You too can become just a Christian and a member of the Lord's church. If you truly believe in Christ then you will obey his commandments. (John 14:15; Luke 6:46). He wants you to

repent or turn away from your unscriptural belief and practices and then be baptized, immersed in water, for the remission of sins. (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). If you will do this then the Lord will add you to his church and you will be just a Christian. Why be anything else when you can be just a Christian and a member of the church of Christ?

The Resurrection Of Jesus

Henry E. Pipkin

The great fundamental of the Christian Religion is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection bears directly upon whether or not He is God's Son, and thus upon His claims that He came from heaven. The doctrine concerning the resurrection of Jesus is so basic and strategic that some serious Bible scholars suggest that the resurrection of Christ is the proper place to begin a study of Christianity, rather than to begin with the life and teachings of Jesus.

The writer of this article remembers receiving something of a shock when it was first his privilege to attend the lectures of the late Sir Edwyn Hoskyns. The lecturer began with the declaration that as our subject was the Theology and Ethics of the New Testament we must begin with the passages about the Resurrection. It seemed to contradict all the obvious preconceptions. Was it not right to trace first the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, the events of His life, and the words of His teaching? Here, surely, the essence of the Gospel might be found, and as a finale the Resurrection comes so as to seal and confirm the message. No. The Resurrection is a true starting-place for the study of the making and the meaning of the New Testament.

If there is sufficient evidence that Jesus arose from the dead, then there is scarcely any room to doubt His miraculous conception and virgin birth or any of His miracles.

Believers, skeptics and unbelievers are generally agreed on the

following: (1) Jesus Christ lived, died, and His tomb was sealed; (2) On the third day His body was gone from the tomb; (3) Disciples then and in subsequent centuries believed, and millions today believe, that He arose from the dead.

Concerning the first point, there have been a few individuals who have denied that Jesus ever lived here on the earth. However, people making such denials have not had much success persuading thinking people that Jesus did not live. In the light of sacred and secular evidence, for a person to deny that Jesus Christ ever lived is somewhat like one's going out into the warmth of a sunny day and then denying that the sun shines!

One other exception concerning the first point stated above: some have tried to evade the force of Jesus' resurrection by insisting that Jesus didn't really die; rather, He merely lost consciousness, or swooned, and later regained consciousness. What Bible evidence is there that He really did die?

First, let it be remembered that after Jesus was arrested and condemned, He was then scourged as a matter of course (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15). This involved a severe beating. There were instances, we are told, when individuals actually died from the scourging.

After the scourging Jesus was made to bear His cross (John 19:17). On the way of the crucifixion Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear Jesus' cross (Matthew 27:32). It is usually inferred that Jesus was so weakened from the severe beating that He needed someone to carry the cross for him; the Roman soldiers impressed Simon to bear it for Jesus.

Secondly, we are told that Jesus was nailed to the cross the third hour (Mark 15:25). Both Matthew and Mark speak also of the ninth hour of that day and of Jesus' death shortly thereafter (Matthew 27:45-50; Mark 15:33-37). Thus Jesus was hanging on the cross for at least six hours, or from about 9:00 a.m. until around 3:00 p.m. that day.

In addition, John 19 tells of the authorities, desire to hasten

the death of the three on the crosses; therefore, the soldiers came and broke the legs of the robbers, but, when they came to Jesus they found that He was already dead. Notice: that was the finding of the *soldiers*, not of His disciples, relatives or others who were kindly disposed toward Him.

The writer of the Gospel of John points out that, even though Jesus was found to be dead, "...when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water." (John 19:33-34).

When Joseph of Arimathaea went to Pilate the Roman governor and asked for the body of Jesus, so that he might bury it, Pilate was a bit surprized to hear that Jesus was already dead, and he called in and made special inquiry of the centurian. The centurian verified to Pilate that Jesus was dead (Mark 15:44-45).

Furthermore, if Jesus had merely swooned, how could He have, in such a weakened condition, removed the stone from the tomb where His body had been sealed up? (When certain women were on their way to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus' body, they were wondering who would roll the great stone away for them). (Mark 16:3).

If Jesus had regained consciousness and removed the heavy stone from the mouth of the tomb, how could He have done so and escaped detection of the formidable guard that had been placed at the tomb? (Concerning this "guard", we shall say more a bit later).

During His ministry Jesus spoke a number of times concerning His death. In Matthew 16:21 Jesus speaks of His death, giving details of *where* it would happen, and concerning *who* would put Him to death, and also He promised that He would arise on the third day. In John 10:17-18 Jesus said, "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself." Jesus indicated by these words that His own cooperation

would be necessary before men could put Him to death. Let it be borne in mind that Jesus came to earth to suffer and die for mankind; Isaiah even foretold this substitutionary death almost seven hundred years before Jesus came to the world (Isaiah 53).

Efforts to explain away the death of Christ, therefore, have some real obstacles in their way, as noted above. There is solid evidence that He died; there are great, unsolved problems in the way of those who say otherwise!

Concerning the disappearance of Jesus' body from the tomb, there appear to be two possible explanations: His body was removed by *human* hands, or by *superhuman* power. Of the former, there are two further conceivable possibilities: if His body was taken from the tomb by human hands, it must have been done either by his *friends* or by His *enemies*. Let us look first to the human possibilities—His enemies.

Before going further in this discussion, it will be helpful to consider the attitudes and actions of Jesus' enemies. Let it be remembered that the religious leaders among the Jews were the ones who wanted Jesus put to death. They achieved their end by inciting the multitude against Jesus, and by bringing pressure to bear on Pilate (Matthew 27:20; Mark 15:15). The Jews, being in subjugation to the Romans at that time, did not have the authority to put a person to death legally—the Romans had to do that (John 18:31). The Romans, however, had no animosity against Jesus; the fact is, Pilate found Jesus innocent (John 18:38).

When the enemies of Jesus had their way in the matter, and had satisfied themselves that Jesus was dead, they took the following precautions:

“Now on the morrow, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the

people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a guard: go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them." (Matthew 27:62-66).

Several particulars of the above passage need to be looked at closely, bearing in mind that they are words of Jesus' enemies, spoken by them to the governor Pilate after the death of Jesus. They were spoken the next day after Jesus' crucifixion. The words were spoken by the "chief priests and Pharisees", who had taken the lead in having Jesus put to death.

"That deceiver" is the enemies' way of referring to Jesus. (Incidentally, whom has Jesus ever deceived? It would have been interesting to hear some then, it would be interesting to hear someone now, explain where when and who it was that Jesus deceived!)

Jesus' enemies remembered that Jesus had said, "After three days I rise again." They seemingly had paid more attention to Jesus' words on this matter than Jesus' own disciples had—for the disciples hadn't fully understood that Jesus would die, not to mention His rising from the dead. Although Jesus' enemies remembered the words of Jesus, concerning His rising from the dead the third day, they doubtless had not believed the words. What they were interested in was that Pilate should "Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first." Again, that is the language of Jesus' enemies. They were concerned with what they thought might happen on the third day; they were afraid the disciples might come and take Jesus' body away. However, there is no evidence that the disciples had any such thought; but the rulers feared that, and they were taking careful precautions to prevent such from happening.

The Greek word translated "guard" is of special interest to this study. The word is *koustodias*, which the Greek dictionary defines as "a guard composed of soldiers" (Matthew 27:66). One

older commentator suggests that the "guard" consisted of sixty men. Even though we cannot be certain about the exact number, the plurality of the soldiers is made clear. Matthew 28:11 mentions some of the guard coming into the city, which implies that there were some of the soldiers of the guard who did not go into the city. In view of the urgency the Jews felt in this matter, we can be sure that they secured a number of soldiers large enough, in their judgment, to be adequate.

Matthew 27:62-66 relates that when Pilate gave them permission to place the guard, saying, "Make it as sure as you can", verse 66 says, "So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them."

What stone did they seal? It was the "great stone" Joseph of Arimathaea had rolled to the door of the tomb in which he had laid Jesus' body (Matthew 27:60); it was the same stone that some women on their way to the tomb were wondering, "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the tomb?" (Mark 16:3). The record tells us that when the Jewish authorities set the guard, they sealed the stone. This might have involved stretching a rope or string across the stone and the mouth of the tomb, or else sealing it in some manner with wax or the like.

All of the above helps answer the question, Did Jesus' enemies remove His body from the tomb? The answer is, emphatically, *no*. They already had his body in their possession, under their guard. They had his body exactly where they wanted it, and the last thing they wanted to happen was for it to be removed from the tomb!

Did Jesus' friends take his body from the tomb? There is no evidence in the Scriptures that they had any desire to do so. Also, there is every indication that, if they had desired to remove Jesus' body from the tomb, they would not have been able to do so—due to the elaborate precautions the Jewish authorities had taken. Therefore, we can safely conclude that Jesus' disciples, nor any other of His friends, did not take His body from the tomb. Human hands, therefore, neither friends or enemies, did not take His body from the tomb.

Did God raise Him from the dead? The Bible record says,

both in prophecy and history, that God did raise Him from the dead.

"Now late on the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was as lightening, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples, He is risen from the dead: and lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." (Matthew 28:1-7).

All of this is in harmony with what Jesus foretold a number of times before His death (Matthew 16:21; 17:12, 22, 23; 20:17-19).

Also, in Matthew chapter 28, verses 11-15, is the record of how the soldiers and Jesus' enemies reacted to the earthquake, the appearance of the angel, and the disappearance of Jesus' body from the tomb:

"Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city, and told unto the chief priests all the things that were come to pass. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying was spread abroad among the Jews, and continueth until this day.

Let it be noted that the earliest account hostile to the idea of resurrection of Jesus is recorded in the Bible itself. The guards went to the Jewish authorities and reported what had *actually* happened at the tomb of Jesus. The above false report came

from the enemies of Jesus, and was the best they could do under the circumstances of a very bad, embarrassing situation for them. Note that the Jews did not charge the soldiers with neglect. They simply bribed the soldiers. They said: "Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care." (Matthew 28:13-14).

The story that the authorities made up, however, is full of weaknesses, even on the surface of it. (1) Soldiers did not take lightly their guard duty; if they did, or if a prisoner escaped even miraculously, the soldiers could lose their lives (see Acts 12:19). (2) If the soldiers had been asleep, why didn't at least some of them get awakened when the huge stone was moved from the tomb? (3) If they had been asleep, how could they have known *who* removed the body? (4) Where would a group of sorrowing, demoralized disciples muster enough courage to face a large number of soldiers to even attempt to remove the body of Jesus—even if that had been their desire?

Concerning the part played by the Jewish enemies of Jesus, one commentator observes :

We cannot but be struck with the wisdom of God, in ordering the circumstances of the Saviour's burial in such a manner as to avoid the possibility of deception. Had all this been done by His *friends*, it might have been said that they only pretended to secure the tomb, and only pretended that he was dead. But He was adjudged to be dead by *the Jews themselves*; Pilate was satisfied that that was the fact; they had their own way about His burial; He was buried alone; the place of His sepulcher was made sure, *expressly to prevent His being removed*; and they placed around Him a guard, in their own judgment, large enough to prevent His being taken away by force or strength. His very enemies, therefore, took every possible precaution to place His resurrection beyond the possibility of suspicion of fraud and imposture, and were the very means of furnishing the most striking proof that His death, burial, and resurrection were not impositions but most affecting, awful, and yet cheering realities.

The story the authorities paid the soldiers to tell apparently carried little weight with thinking people who were honest, for many people were converted to Christianity in Jerusalem shortly after this time. On the day of Pentecost, mentioned in Acts chapter 2, three thousand responded to the Gospel message (Acts 2:41,47). In Acts 4:4 we are told that the number increased to 5,000. More, and more were added to the Lord (Acts 5:14). Even a number of priests, from the Jewish Old Testament system, became obedient to the Christian Faith (Acts 6:7).

In the light of these and other facts, we feel compelled to say, in the words of the Apostle Paul, "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Jesus' resurrection bears directly on the matter of His being the Son of God, for Paul says, concerning Jesus Christ, "Who was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection, of the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord". (Romans 1:4)

Mankind cannot well afford not to consider this matter of Jesus' resurrection carefully and prayerfully, for it has direct bearing on the great Judgment Day to come. Paul said to some people in Athens, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead". (Acts 17:30,31). Judgment is coming; Jesus is to be the Judge; His resurrection guarantees that He will be the Judge !

An individual who has learned to believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and who is willing to repent of his sins (cf. Acts 17:30), is then in position to take a further step toward reenacting the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in his own life—thus becoming a Christian. Paul speaks of these matters to Christians at Rome—

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection". (Romans 6:1-5).

Dear Reader, will you seriously consider these facts of the Gospel, obey the commands of the same, that you may have a much better life here and now, and, in the after a while, have an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ !

Do the Spirits of the Righteous Go Immediately to Heaven at Death?

Guy N. Woods

These studies in the state of the dead have brought us to the following conclusions: (1) Death is the condition subsisting when the spirit is no longer in the body; (2) at death, the body returns to the dust ;(3) the spirit enters a realm designated as Hades (from "a" negative; and "eidoo," to see, thus literally, the unseen); (4) righteous spirits occupy a position in Hades variously denominated paradise or Abraham's bosom; (5) wicked spirits are restrained in tartarus, a position or place in Hades, set off from paradise or Abraham's bosom, by an impassable gulf. (James 2:26; Eccles. 12:7; Acts 2:27; Luke 16:19-31; 2 Pet. 2:4.)

There are those who concede the correctness of these conclu-

sions in the period prior to the resurrection of Christ, but who maintain that on the occasion of the Lord's ascension, the paradise realm of Hades and all of its occupants—the saints of the former dispensations—were moved to heaven, since which time all righteous spirits enter at death upon their final reward in heaven. Among the writers of the Restoration Movement, F.G. Allen, of *Old Path Pulpit* fame, pioneered and defended this position. The ablest men among us, however, have always rejected Allen's position. The following examples—and the quotations might be greatly extended—will suffice to show with what positiveness they repudiated it:

Alexander Campbell: "This argument in proof of Hades as distinct from heaven and hell—as the condition of all human spirits from death to the final resurrection—is itself our tenth argument against the doctrine of destructionism." (Popular Lectures and Addresses, p. 441.) "To explain the term Hades, it must be observed that there are three states of human spirits entirely distinct from each other. The first state of human spirits is in union with an animal body. This state terminates at death. The second state is that in which human spirits are separated from their animal bodies. This commences at death and terminates with the resurrection of the body. This is precisely what is called Hades. The third state commences with the re-union of the spirit and the body, and continues ever after. Hades is said to be destroyed when the third state commences. The termination of Hades is clearly foretold by John in these words, "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Living Oracles, Appendix, p. 58.)

J.W. McGarvey: "The resurrection of Jesus is not appreciated by the religious world now, as it was by the apostles. As respects the return of his soul from Hades, Protestant writers have fled so far from the justly-aborred purgatory of the Catholic, and the gloomy soul-sleeping of the Materialist, that they have passed beyond the scripture doctrine, and either ignore altogether the existence of an intermediate state, or deny that the souls of the righteous are short of ultimate happiness during this period. . . . As long as men entertain the idea that their spirits enter into final bliss and glory immediately after death, they can never be

made to regard the resurrection of the body as a matter of importance. This idea has ever produced a general skepticism among the masses, in reference to a resurrection of the body; for men are very apt to doubt the certainty of future events for which they see no necessity." (Commentary on Acts, First Edition, p. 34.)

Moses E. Laird: "We stop not here to raise the question as to what paradise is or where it is. It is enough for us to know that it is the abode into which Jesus and the poor man who died with him entered immediately after death.....the abode perhaps in which dwell the spirits of all the just until they enter their spiritual bodies at the resurrection." (Quarterly, December, 1863.)

For the first three centuries, the so-called church fathers taught, without exception, that the spirits of just men remain in paradise—Hades—until the resurrection of the body (Knapp, Theology), and it was not until the seventh century that the theory of an intermediate state for both the righteous and the wicked was seriously questioned (Shedd, History of Christian Doctrine).

The theory that paradise was moved to heaven at the resurrection of Christ is an integral part of the premillennial doctrine, and is subscribed to by all premillennialists. True, all who hold the theory are not premillennialists, but all premillennialists hold the theory. W.E. Blackstone, whose book, *Jesus Is Coming*, is a veritable textbook of Premillennialism, says that "since the resurrection of our Lord, the souls of believers, at death, go to a paradise above." (Page 29.)

The arguments by which Allen sought to sustain his theory were:

1. Stephen bade Jesus receive his spirit, from which it is assumed that the first martyr expected to go where Jesus is, i.e., to heaven.

2. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; hence, to be in heaven,

3. Paul was caught up to the "third heaven"; the "third

heaven" is assumed to be the final abode of the righteous; the apostle was also caught up to paradise; paradise is, therefore, the "third heaven," the final home of the righteous. (2 Cor. 12: 1ff.)

4. There was no absolute forgiveness of sins under earlier dispensations, hence it was not possible to go to heaven prior to the death of Christ; since that event, this disability has been removed.

5. Christ, our High Priest, opened up the veil of the temple, thus making a way into the holiest manifest.

6. The Lord destroyed him who had power over death—the devil—and delivered them "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," from which it is assumed that (a) the deliverance of this passage *was the bearing away of the souls of the righteous in Hades to heaven!* (Heb. 2:14, 15.)

Such were the arguments which Allen advanced to sustain his theory that the souls of the righteous enter immediately into heaven at death, and which are repeated by those who subscribe to his views today.

Arguments 1 and 2 fall short of the claim made for them, because (a) they ignore the omnipresence of the Lord; and (b) the same difficulty faces those who concede that the righteous did not go directly to heaven before the death of Christ. Solomon said that at death the spirit *returns to God who gave it*. (Eccles. 12:7); when, therefore, it is explained how the spirit can go to God who gave it, yet not be in heaven, the same explanation will suffice for the case of Stephen and Paul. To be with the Lord is to be in his care and keeping; and the place designed for this is between death and the resurrection, the realm of paradise or Abraham's bosom. Those in this realm are with the Lord; it does not, however, follow that they are in heaven.

The contention that the "third heaven," in 2 Cor. 12: 1ff., is styled *paradise* proves that under the Christian dispensation the paradise of the Hadean world has been moved to heaven is far from conclusive. True, heaven is a paradise, but not every para-

dise is heaven. Heaven is a *city*; Memphis is a city; shall we thence conclude that therefore Memphis is *heaven*? The word "paradise," originally a Persian garden, and then figuratively a place of blessing, is descriptive of heaven, because heaven is such a place; it does not, however, follow that every place of blessing is heaven.

It is true that there was no absolute forgiveness of sins under former dispensations; and our Lord did indeed make manifest a way into the most holy place; but Brother Allen's conclusion which he draws from these premises is an *Ignoratio Elenchi*, a misapprehension of the question. The facts stated do not have any necessary connection with the proposition to be proved, and thus the conclusion which he draws does not follow.

Argument 6 is an example of incorrect exegesis. (a) The word *destroy* in this passage (*katargeo*) does not mean to annihilate, but to bring to naught. This the Lord did by perfecting and executing a plan by which to deliver man from the power and dominion of the devil. (b) This passage must not be interpreted to mean that all men will be delivered from bondage, but only such as are willing to avail themselves of the means provided. (c) Those who feared death are men who dread the pain, the misery, and the dissolution which attends it, and the uncertainty which follows it. (d) Those thus delivered are men who were all of their lifetime *subject to bondage* (*enochoi doulias*), bondslaves, "Used of the slavish sense of fear, devoid alike of buoyancy of spirit and of trust in God, such as is produced by the thought of death." (Thayer, on Heb. 2:15.) It follows, therefore, that (1) the deliverance contemplated in this passage is that which Christ accomplishes through the gospel; (2) the bondage from which these men were delivered included the fear of death and its consequences; (3) *the bondage which they experienced was during their lifetime, and not after they had died and were in the spirit world!* It will therefore be seen that Heb. 2:14, 15, rightly interpreted, has no bearing on the question whatsoever.

We have earlier shown, by deductions drawn from descriptions of the state of the dead by inspired writers, that the abode of the

righteous, between death and the resurrection, is *paradise* in the Hadean world. We shall now engage to show that no other conclusion can possibly be true.

1. "No man hath seen God at any time." (1 John 4:12.) No *man* is comprehensive of the whole; no man, woman, boy, or girl hath seen (American Standard Version, *beheld*) God at *any time* (embracing every moment of time from creation until John wrote these words near the close of the first century of the Christian era.) If any human being ever saw God one moment (*beheld* his face), John's statement is false. The "hope" of the children of God is to "see him (God) even as he is." (1 John 3:1, 2.) It is unaccountable that the spirits of just men could occupy heaven and not be privileged to behold the face of God. But, when John wrote, this privilege had never been vouchsafed to man. It follows, therefore, that no man had entered heaven near the close of the first century. This argument we regard as absolutely conclusive of the issue. The plain, unambiguous, unequivocal statement of John, near the end of the apostolic age, and nearly threequarters of a century after it is alleged that all the faithful saints of former dispensations had been borne to heaven, that no man had ever seen God at any time, lifts the matter from the realm of doubt and settles it. Either one can occupy heaven and yet be restrained from seeing God; or no man has ever ascended. To affirm the first premise is absurd; to concede the second is to admit the correctness of the proposition we affirm. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. . . . And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: *and they shall see his face*; and his name shall be in their foreheads." (Rev. 22: 1-4.)

2. "And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descendeth out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven," (John 3:13.) In discussion with the people who deny that there are three distinct personalities in the Godhead—God the Father; Jesus Christ the Son; and the Holy Spirit—the "Oneness-Holiness," when their attention is directed to the fact that in some instances one of the Persons of the Godhead is said to be in heaven, while another is, at the same time, declared to be on earth,

they cite this passage in an effort to show that *the Lord was on earth and in heaven at the same time!* In reply, we have maintained that these words, though in the midst of a recorded address by the Saviour, are to be attributed to John: and that they were therefore penned many years after the Lord had ascended. A fair and impartial consideration of the facts involved leads to this conclusion: (a) At the time these words were written, the Lord had ascended; (b) he was, at that time, in heaven. But, he had neither ascended, nor was he in heaven at the time the address, in which these words appear, was being delivered. We must, therefore, assume that they constitute a comment by the historian after the events they mention had occurred.

The Gospel of John was written far along in the latter part of the first century. The words of this text were written following the resurrection and ascension of Christ! After the Lord had ascended it is affirmed he alone had ascended into heaven. It is our conviction that these words were written near the close of the first century. We affirm, therefore, that many years after our Lord returned to heaven no other one had ascended.

3. "For David is not ascended into the heavens." (Acts 2:34.) These words were uttered by Peter in his memorable sermon on the first Pentecost following the resurrection. Ten days after the Lord's ascension the apostle affirmed that David had not ascended. The Shepherd King had been dead approximately 1,000 years. He had, however, not ascended into the heavens. We are not unmindful of the manner in which Brother Allen seeks to avoid this conclusion. The statement is affirmed of David's body, and not his spirit, so he avers. The context will show, however, that the statement must embrace both body and soul, or Peter's argument is inconclusive. David had written that somebody's soul would not be left in Hades, nor would his body see corruption. Peter declared that thus spake he of the resurrection of Christ, *for* (a) David (in spirit) had not ascended into heaven and his soul was therefore yet in Hades; and (b) his sepulchre was yet with them, and his body had seen corruption. But, were it true that his soul was no longer in Hades, and since it could not be *proved* that a body which had been dead for a thousand years was

David's, an objector might have alleged that the statement was affirmed of the patriarch and that he did not speak of the resurrection of Christ.

He of whom David spoke would not have his soul left in Hades (Acts 2:31); this could not be affirmed of David because "David is not ascended into the heavens." (Acts 2:34.) Neither would this *one* see corruption; which was likewise not true of David for he was "both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." (Acts 2:29.) Thus, the statement that his sepulchre is with us to this day is the equivalent of saying that David did see corruption; and the words, "David is not ascended into the heavens," mean simply that his soul *has been left in Hades!*

4. "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55.) This is a quotation, by the apostle, from Hos. 13:14, where it reads, in our translation of the Old Testament (American Standard Version):

"I will ransom them from the power of Sheol;
I will redeem them from death: O death, where
are thy plagues? O Sheol, where is thy destruction?"

Death, in 1 Cor. 15:55, is thus figuratively used to designate *Sheol*, the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek Hades; the realm of departed spirits. Paul thus represents the risen saint as having accomplished the deliverance from Sheol (Hades) which the ancient prophet promised. *1 Cor. 15:55 contemplates the deliverance of the righteous spirits only from the power of Sheol (Hades).* This deliverance follows the resurrection of the body. The spirits of the righteous must, therefore, await the resurrection of the body before they are delivered from the Hadean realm. Following this deliverance Death (regarded as the ruler) and Hades (The territory of death) are to be "cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Rev. 20:14.) It is *following* the resurrection that "they that have done good" receive "life" (John 5:28,29); it is at the resurrection of the just that the blessed "are recompensed"; (Luke

14:14); and it was "in that day" (the judgment day) that Paul expected to receive the crown that was *laid up* for him! (2 Tim. 4:8.)

Now That I Am A Christian

Emmanuel Failbuse

I know few of the friends who are reading this statement, already know me and must be getting surprised as what I am refering to. Yes, it is true-NOW, I AM A CHRISTIAN. Few months before I could also publically say that I was a Christian just because I was born in a family attached to a denomination and had traditional act of Christianity with a so-called Baptism of Sprinkling on me. Also I was engaged in many religious activities with lot of zéal and enthusiasm. But I was not able to detect much sense in recognising myself as a Christian. Although I used to read the Bible, believed in Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God but still there was no joy in my heart and I could not distinguish myself from any common human being. As a matter of fact, I never seriously thought about these questions: What makes me a Christian? Whether I am worthy of calling myself a Christian? Do I have the assurance that I would inherit the eternal life?

Oh! this all seemed to be so simple for awhile because I did believe that I was born in a "Christian" family. I had been sprinkled as an infant, I had learnt about the teachings of the Bible, I had been confirmed in a church by the Bishop, I was regular in my church activities, I knew Christ shed his blood for my sins and had a positive feeling that he would save me.

But not many months ago I took this question seriously, as to where I stand? Whether towards the gate of Heaven or Hell; on the broad way or the narrow way, or to be more specific *Whether I am a Christian at all?* With this question in my mind I opened the Bible and started reading this time with the intention of locat-

ing my state as to where I stood according to God's word. I found myself I was a member of a church which was nowhere described in the Bible because I was not a member of THE CHURCH but that of a denomination. The elements of Christianity in me, i.e., becoming a Christian and living as a Christian were not according to the pattern of the word of God. I read 4 books of the gospel, the Acts of the Apostles and 21 Epistles written to Christians dictating the pattern of the Christian life. The gospel generated the FAITH, the book of Acts taught me obedience to faith to become a Christian and the Epistles taught pattern of living a Christian life.

After reading the word of God I realized that unless I have the obedient faith, I am not in Christ and I am not a Christian. Because all the instances of New Testament conversions clearly show the necessity of obedience. My condition was much confused. I started running to many religious and denominational leaders but each one of them gave me a different plan leading to salvation, such as-If you have faith that is enough; Pray steadfastly and wait for Lord's call; get baptised if you feel like, because it is only a sign; you have already been baptised; accept Christ as your personal Saviour, etc. All these different statements confused me further because they were more according to people's own logic and thinking, and not what I had read in my Bible.

I came back to the WORD OF GOD again and prayed to God to lead me to the right way. If all the denominational so called Pastors and Reverends speak right things and according to the word of God then why not they speak the same thing? Jesus prayed for oneness (Unity) (John 17:21) and Paul exhorted to be one in mind and judgment as a Christian (I Cor. 1:10).

Hence, by the word of God, I saw that I must not only have faith but a living faith by fulfilling the acts of obedience, for faith without work is dead and can't save me (James 2:14). So I tried to stick to God's word only instead of following personal suggestions of men.

Therefore, first I heard the word of God, "So faith cometh by

hearing and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom.10:17). I learnt that faith in God is necessary. “Without faith it is impossible to please him for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb. 11:6). Then I learnt that faith must show itself in works. “Ye see that by works a man is justified and not by faith only. (James 2:24). Therefore, I determined to change my manner of life, i.e., I repented and realized that I must leave the life of sin. Jesus said, “I tell you Nay, But except ye repent ye shall all in like manner perish (Luke 13:3,5). The first thing I did to show my desires to change and to obey Christ’s command was to confess my faith in Christ. Jesus said, “Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32). Confession is done by mouth (Romans 10:8-10), and with that preparation I made up my mind to be baptized because Jesus Christ commanded “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved (Mk. 16:16) No doubt, all the denominations gave different theories, modes and reasons for Baptism—some said, it is optional not compulsory, others said, it is just an outward sign to show, but I read what Jesus commanded and knew it was needed for my salvation (Mk. 16:16; I Pet. 3:21) I saw the example in Acts 2:37,38 where they asked “Men and brethren what shall we do to be saved?” (They had already believed). Peter said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of your sins.” Again in Acts 22:16 Annanias says to Saul of Tarsus, “Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins.” Hence by seeing the commandment and example I came to know that Baptism is IMMERSION, IT IS AFTER FAITH, REPENTANCE & CONFESSION, IT IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS and is to be taken immediately and in the act of Baptism the old man of sin is buried in the watery grave and one gets resurrected to walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:4). Thus, as soon as I found one Christian brother who could baptise me on the basic principles of the New Testament, I was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for the remission of my past sins. This moment brought me the real happiness and hope for eternal life. Baptism put me into Christ “For as many of you were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal. 3:27). And since I came into Christ so I became a Christian (Acts 11:26; I Pet. 4:16), and also became a member of the Lord’s church. Not that I joined it but the Lord

added me to the church when I obeyed. (Acts 2:47).

Dear friends, you have read what I was and what I am now. Yes, now I am a CHRISTIAN. A member of the Church of Christ which is his body (I Cor. 12:12-13). A citizen of the Kingdom of heaven (Col. 1:13-14). A living stone which makes up the church of Christ (I Pet. 2:5). In conclusion, I would like to mention that we must have obedient faith and thus we would receive the gift of salvation and remission of sins. God will not remember our past sins when we obey Him (Heb. 8:12). Now is the day of salvation and to be a Christian. Let us not be like Felix and Drusilla who waited for an appropriate time which never came (Acts 24:45). Only by being a faithful Christian one is prepared for Christ's return. My dear friends, won't you read your Bible and obey today, to be saved and be a member of the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18) and to be happy and let the world know "NOW THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN".

Let's Go Back To The Bible

Jerry W. Joseph

FOR THE STANDARD IN RELIGION. II Peter 1:20-21; II Timothy 3:16-17.

FOR THE SCRIPTURAL PLAN OF SALVATION. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:9-10; Galatians 3:26-27; I Peter 3:21.

TO LEARN OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH. Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:3; 4:4; 5:23-25; Colossians 1:18; Galatians 3:26-27.

TO LEARN OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH. Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.

TO LEARN HOW TO WORSHIP SCRIPTURALLY. John 4:24; Acts 20:7; Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

TO LEARN HOW TO LIVE THE RIGHT KIND OF LIFE. Titus 2:12; Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:19-21.

IN OUR PREACHING. II Timothy 4:1-5; I Peter 4:11; Romans 1:15-17.

IN OUR HOMES. Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21.

IN EVANGELISM. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:46-47; 5:42.

TO LEARN OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BRETHREN. Hebrews 13:1; II Timothy 4:2; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:16; 19:20; I John 3:17; Romans 16:17; II Thessalonians 3:6, 15.

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