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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

“There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”

An antitype is one that is of the same kind but situated opposite. In 1 Peter 3:20 the apostle Peter was reminding his readers how eight souls were saved from the great flood in the days of Noah through water. And then, in the next verse 21 he mentioned how people are saved today from sin, he said, “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Who says, baptism has nothing to do with man’s salvation from sin? The Bible says, and clearly, dear reader, baptism saves us. Didn’t Christ teach, he who believes and is baptized will be saved? (Mark 16:16). According to Acts 2:38 one must be baptized for, not because of, the remission or forgiveness of sins.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a command of Christ that everyone must obey, after believing in Him and turning away from sin. Christ commanded His disciples to go everywhere and preach His gospel, which is: he died for the sinners, and was buried in a tomb, and was resurrected after three days. (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Baptism is

the portrayal of the gospel as it shows the death and the burial and the resurrection of Christ, and reminds one who has been baptized that he had died to sin and was buried, and was raised to walk in the newness of life. (Romans 6:3-6).

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Baptism is not a command for little babies or children. Those who believe should be baptized. (Mk. 16:16). And those who repent or turn away from wrongs must be baptized. (Acts 2:38). Therefore, those who do not understand the clear meaning of baptism, that it is a command of the Saviour which must be obeyed to receive salvation and the forgiveness of sins, should not be baptized.

HOW SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

The word "baptize" is from the Greek word "Baptizo" Baptizo means to immerse or bury. Sprinkling, effusion or pouring, or walking under some object is not baptism. Baptism is a symbol of death and burial and resurrection. Notice, what the apostle Paul said to Christians at Rome: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4).

WHERE SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

One should be baptized where there is enough water to immerse or submerge or to bury in water. Eunuch, in Acts chapter 8, was baptized when Philip and the eunuch came to a place, as they were travelling, where there was enough water to be baptized. In this case, the Bible says, "And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he (Philip) baptized him." (Acts 8:38). And then it says that both of them came up out of the water. Now, if baptism means sprinkling or pouring of water, then there was no need for them to go down into the water. Again, Eunuch was traveling in his chariot with his servants, and he must have had enough drinking water which could have been used to sprinkle or pour if sprinkling of water was baptism. Notice, too, that eunuch was baptized in a deserted place, or in jungle. There

is no special designated place for baptism. One could be baptized in any place, where there is enough water to baptize or submerge.

WHEN SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED

One should be baptized at the same time when one hears the gospel of Jesus Christ and believes in Him and is ready to repent of sins. Eunuch was baptized right there in that deserted place. And just before this we read in the same chapter of Acts 8 of those men and women who were baptized after hearing from Philip concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 8:12). In Acts chapter 16 we read about the Jailer and his family members. They all heard about Jesus after midnight in their home through Paul and Silas. They believed in Jesus Christ. Acts 16:33 says, "And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and immediately he and his family were baptized." In fact, there is not even one example in the whole Bible where people ever delayed even for one day from being baptized, after they were convinced that one must be baptized to be saved from sin. Unlike today, as many wait for the convenient time to be baptized, for a certain day or month or occasion or until someone special arrives at the place. This shows how to most people baptism is just a religious rite or ritual or a ceremony or a sacrament, which it is not.

WHY SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

As already seen from the Scripture cited above that to be saved and to receive the forgiveness of sins one must be baptized. One should not be baptized to please someone or to receive the membership of a church. Saul, whom we know as the apostle Paul, was told to be baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16). He wrote later, and said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27). To put on Christ or to get into Christ one must be baptized.

BY WHOM SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

Christ told His followers to go and preach the gospel and he who believes and is baptized will be saved. (Mk. 16:16). Any follower of Christ is authorised by Him to baptize a person who believes in Him. There is no power or holiness or purity in the hands of one baptizing another person. Just as there is no power

in the water. The one being baptized, who is obeying the command of Christ, is the recipient of salvation from sin through Christ.

IN WHOSE NAME SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

On this Christ left no room to speculate or opine. He commanded: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19). That is, to baptize by the authority of the Deity. (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are the three personalities in the Deity or the Godhead. (Matt. 3:13-17). There is one God. (1 Tim. 2:5). In the Bible when people were told to be baptized in the name of Christ or in the name of the Lord, it simply means that they were to be baptized by the authority of Christ or the Lord. Name signifies the authority. On the other hand, there is no such example in the entire Bible where we can readily find what was said or uttered by one who had baptized a person. One should, therefore, as Christ authorized, be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Please contact the editor if you want to be baptized Scripturally.

How Are Prayers Answered?

J.C. CHOATE

Prayer is the avenue through which we speak to the Father in Heaven. He has promised to hear us if we pray according to His will (1 John 5:14,15). But *how* does He answer our prayers? Many explanations have been given to this question, but the only one we are interested in is the one we find in God's word.

There are those who teach that God miraculously answers prayers, that when a person prays, the sick are healed, the dead are raised, and numerous other such things are done. To support this, they go to Jesus and the Apostles and the miracles they performed. It should be pointed out, however, that even though Jesus and the Apostles did perform miracles, they did not eradicate sickness and disease from the world—which they were

fully capable of doing, *if the eradication of disease had been their goal in performing miracles!* Rather, they healed some people, they even raised some from the dead, but this was done *to convince their listeners that they were of God and that their message was from God.* Their ultimate goal was to make *believers* out of their hearers, not simply to heal someone. After Christ died, and the New Testament was given in written form, the miraculous age ceased. One can pray today for the Lord to miraculously heal the sick and raise the dead, but God has not promised to answer such prayers.

Does the foregoing statement mean that God does not now hear our prayers? That He does not answer them? If so, why did He ask us to pray? *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). *"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son "* (John 14:13). *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him"* (1 John 5:14,15).

We are mistaken if we think that the works of God are limited to only *miraculous tools*. Throughout history, most of God's answers to prayers have been made through His providential working, through natural-appearing tools. He works through governments, events, information, human associates, foods, water, missions that motivate us to live and work, and a thousand and one other tools.

In healing, God works through nature, through herbs and medicines. He works through doctors and nurses. Did not the Lord say that they that are sick need a physician? *"When Jesus heard it, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick'"* (Mark 2:17). Did not Paul, by inspiration, advise Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake?

We pray for God's blessings and for His help, as we do *our part* in living responsibly in this world, eating nourishing food, exercising, taking care of our health. God's part is to bless our efforts, to help us find the right medical care and to enable doctors

and nurses to care for our needs. An example: I was not ill, but I decided to have a thorough medical check-up. At the last minute, we requested that a colonoscopy be done. To our shock, it was found that I had a large malignant tumor of the colon! We were so thankful for the decision to have the check-up and that the tumor had been discovered before it had broken through the colon wall. It was removed through surgery, and my life was spared for further years of work in God's service — but *no miracle* was needed. Prayers were answered, but God worked through natural means.

Maybe our need, as a child of God, is for help in making a decision. He does not speak audibly to us, but still He can help us. We make decisions, based on information. God can help us come across the various pieces of information we need; He can help us in our evaluation of the information; then as we ask Him to over-rule in the decision we make, we move forward, trusting that we are doing the right thing.

Perhaps someone is searching for God, for the truth, but he doesn't know how to find Him. One such man lived in Myanmar, a Buddhist country largely cut off from mission efforts. How did God answer his prayers? Through a "chance" meeting at the Yangon airport with an Indian man whose passion was studying Bible correspondence courses! The two men began to talk, and the Burmese man was given the address of a teacher in Malaysia. He enrolled in the course and was converted. Through his efforts, then, the Lord's church was begun in Myanmar! Did God answer his prayers for help? Certainly! But no miracle was necessary! But how beautifully God worked across national boundaries, involving people in *three countries*, to answer sincere prayers for spiritual help!

As we pray, we have to believe that the Lord knows best, and we must desire to do God's will. Too often, as humans, we pray for what we *want*, trying to change God's mind so that He will want that for us too, and will give it to us — and we keep on praying, determined to somehow convince Him that what we want is best! Isn't that how we sometimes do? But we must be careful when we pray, being sure that we want God's will to be done, and not ours, because He knows what is best for us. For instance,

we might pray for wealth, but if God gave that to us it might destroy us. Or we might pray to live a longer life, but in that time we might leave our love for Him and become unfaithful. We might pray for the best education possible, but then allow that to fill us with so much pride that we would no longer humble ourselves before the Lord or seek to do His will. There are many "good" things for which we could pray, things that God in His foreknowledge may know would be eternally detrimental to us. He would not say "yes" to those requests.

Again, do we believe in prayer? Yes, we do. Does God answer prayer? Again, yes, He does. God has not promised to *miraculously* answer our prayers today, but He cares for us through providential, natural-appearing means. This allows space for our faith to grow, as we look for the beautiful and unexpected means He uses to answer our prayers! Do not doubt the Lord, but believe in Him and be a faithful son or daughter. He will respond to you and to your needs, doing what is best for you.

Crucified With Christ

FRANCIS DAVID

When a person becomes a Christian, he or she becomes a child of God, and is crucified with Christ, this what Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." (Gal. 2:20). When we turned to Christ, our life is changed and we seek now His guidance to direct us.

Now like Paul we no longer live for ourselves, but rather we live for Christ. Why is it so? Because our old sinful life has been done away and is nailed to the cross and Christ is living in me. As children of God how do we live? What about our lives. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matt. 5:14), then in 16 verse Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify Father in heaven." A Christian is like a light. He is a living example for his fellowmen. He or she does not indulge in

immoral activities. We must keep ourselves pure and holy and this what Paul says "Abstain from every appearance of evil." (I Thess. 5:22). Further he says . . . "Keep yourself pure." (I Tim. 5:22). Since Christian has to keep himself pure, he will not indulge in smoking, drinking or taking drugs. Many of our young people are going toward these bad habits, so it is must that they should be guided properly.

As a Christian we are the temple of God. Since our bodies are like temple these have to be kept clean. A temple is considered a place which is pure and holy. Apostle Paul again says, "Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." (I Cor. 6:19-20). Are we glorifying God through our bodies. The Bible says, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1). We need to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

God has given us these lives on earth, so let us live for Christ and keep ourselves pure and holy in the fear of God. We are pilgrims here and God has given us these lives, so that we may glorify him always through our bodies. Anything which makes us weak spiritually, let us throw it and remove that from our lives. Let us conform to the Christian principles. Let us set our minds on the things above. (Col. 3:2).

First Century Christianity

CHARLES BOX

Is it possible for those of us living in the last days of the twentieth century to be New Testament Christians? Can we be first century Christians in the twentieth century? So much is said about change and so much change is evident. Computers and communications are only two examples. Must the gospel be changed to fit a changing world or is the message of Christ's

sacrifice still sufficient for today? (1 Cor. 15:1-4.)

MAN HAS NOT CHANGED

Today's man struggles with the same greed, lust, and bitterness man has always faced. He has not changed. Human nature today is as it has always been. Man has always been given the choice of good or evil. (Deut. 11:26.) Man's nature loves sin. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom. 7:23.) Man has not changed.

MAN'S PROBLEM HAS NOT CHANGED

In Noah's days people were wicked. "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. 6:5.) In our day sin is still man's problem. Man is basically sinful. He is un-god-like. "For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin." (Eccl. 7:20.) There is no one among accountable people who has not sinned. (Rom. 3:10,23.) Our problem is a common problem—SIN.

MAN'S HOPE HAS NOT CHANGED

Jesus is our hope. "To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27.) Man is the same and so is sin. Man's hope is also the same—Jesus Christ. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. (1 Pet. 2:24.) If it had not been for the death of Jesus man would have been without hope. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit." (1 Pet. 3:18.) Man's hope is in the fact that Jesus suffered sin's penalty in man's place.

First century Christianity is possible today. Through a return to the New Testament teaching in loving obedience to the gospel of Christ you can be a Christian only. (Acts 2:36-47, Rom. 6:1-6.) Have you obeyed the gospel? If not, now is the time to do so.

He Ate with Publicans and Sinners

KEVIN CAULEY

One of the criticisms that Jesus' enemies so often employed was that He ate with the publicans and sinners. We find this criticism recorded for us in the following passages: Matthew 9:10, 11; 11:19; Mark 2:15, 16; Luke 5:30, 7:34, 15:1. This criticism was no doubt leveled at Jesus due to the fact that he associated with these people in order to teach them the gospel. The Pharisees had a strict standard with whom a "faithful Jew" could and could not associate. In essence they labeled out particular people in society and forbade the "faithful" to have relationships with them. These people included publicans, harlots, Samaritans, and "sinners."

Publicans were basically the tax collectors of the day, and carried out the will of the Roman Empire by collecting from the Jewish people. From their frequent association with gentiles alone, this made them "off-limits" to the "faithful" Jew. Publicans also had a practice of taking more taxes than the government required. John the baptizer told these tax-collectors that they needed to repent of this practice (Luke 3:12, 13).

Samaritans were half-blood Jews and that made them impure in the mind of the Pharisees. The Samaritans were descended from the Jewish people who were left behind during the Babylonian captivity. These married the pagans who were already in the land and intermingled themselves so as to violate God's requirements under the Old Law regarding marriage (Deut.7:3; Ezra 10:2).

The harlots of the day were what we would consider prostitutes today. They sold their bodies for money. The Pharisees did not associate with them, no doubt, to maintain their sparkling reputation of "righteousness" among the Jewish people. Sinners were just any other kinds of people that no doubt, sinned, but also, that the Pharisees would not associate on account of their "reputation." These sinners might have been adulterers, thieves, or even other harlots and publicans. It was an all-inclusive category.

First, it should be clear to all that Jesus did not associate with these people in order to engage in their sinful practices. Jesus was the sinless Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:19). He never once committed a sin nor even spoke an inappropriate word (1 Peter 2:22). Second, it should also be clear that Jesus did not associate with these people in order to legitimize their sin. Jesus called upon these people to repent (Matthew 9:13). He taught them that they needed to give up their sin and give their life to God (Luke 15:1-32). Third, it should also be clear that Jesus did not associate with these people to aid them to further commit sin. When the woman taken in adultery was brought before Jesus (John 8:2-11) Jesus did not condemn her to death; however, Jesus told her to "go, and sin no more." His refusal to condemn the woman to death was not license for her to continue to commit adultery.

Jesus did associate with these people in order to teach and preach the gospel (Matthew 21:28-32). What ought we to conclude from Jesus' association with these classes of society? First, we need to be out associating with those classes of society as well for the same purpose. As Christians, we need to be in the world, but not of the world (1 Cor.5:10). What does this mean? It means that we associate with people who are steeped in sin, but we don't participate in that sin. If we were to stop all association with anyone who had sin in their lives, then we would have to go "out of the world." While such may be possible (that is, to practice some bizarre type of isolationism); it is certainly not feasible.

Second, we ought to be telling these lost sinners about the gospel. More than anything else, these classes of society desperately need the power of the gospel (1 Cor.6:9-11). We ought to focus our efforts upon bringing these to salvation through preaching a message of repentance and love, not through shunning them and isolating them from the rest of society. This means that we have to spend time among them and get to know them personally (as did Jesus) so that we can call them to repent in those areas of life where they need to repent.

Third, we ought not to criticize those who are trying to do such. Such displays a true Pharisaical attitude toward teaching and preaching the gospel to the lost. I'm opposed to homosexuality, but I want the homosexual to repent and be saved.

I'm opposed to adultery, but I want the adulterer to repent and be saved. I'm opposed to murder, but I want the murderer to repent and be saved. I'm opposed to immodesty, but I want the immodest person to repent and be saved. If that means that I have to be involved in wholesome community events where these people are at, then I will be there. When we oppose those, who are associating with these kinds of people in order to help them come to the gospel and repent, we are really saying that a certain class of people are not worthy of the gospel. God is no respecter of persons (Rom.2:11; Acts 10:34), and neither ought Christians to be.

We have a great challenge before us today to take the gospel to the lost. Instead of discouraging the hands of our brethren by criticizing (in the above way) their efforts at doing that job, we ought to be supportive and uplifting. It is not inconsequential that those who discourage others in this way, are often the least involved in evangelistic efforts. Such criticism is not only discouraging, but hypocritical. These would do well to heed the advice of Jesus in Matthew 7:1-5. Let us always remember the words of Paul the apostle to the evangelist Timothy, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (1 Tim.1:15). Let us obey our Master; go into the world, and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Born Of Water And The Spirit

CLEM THURMAN

First, let us notice the text and context. A ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus came to Jesus, saying, *"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him."* Jesus then replied, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"* Jesus answered, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit,*

he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!" (John 3:2-5).

For nearly 1500 years after Jesus spoke those words, Bible scholars practically unanimously agreed that the "water" refers to baptism and the "Spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit. Then the doctrine of "faith only" was invented, and (in order to rule out baptism) some began to say that the "water" really referred to the physical birth of man and "Spirit" referred to the spiritual birth. But the language will not allow that. There is one birth, with two elements in verse 5. Note that Jesus does not say, "Born of water and born of Spirit." He states it clearly, *"Born of water and the Spirit."* Let us, then, see how these work together to affect the new birth.

Jesus told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would *"Teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you . . . Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth"* (John 14:26; 16:13). And this is exactly what happened, as we read in Acts 2:4, *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."* The apostle Paul shows that guidance of the Holy Spirit as he wrote, *"The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth"* (1 Cor. 2:11-13). Thus, in what they preached and what they wrote, God was the author as He guided them by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit guided the apostles to preach, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). And they did that. But look carefully at how people are led to believe: *"So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"* (Rom. 10:17). When the word of God (which is given by the Holy Spirit) is preached, people were *"pricked in their hearts"* (Acts 2:37). And, *"With the heart man believeth"* (Rom. 10:10). By the word of God, faith is produced. The result of that faith is then clearly stated, *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God"* (1 John 5:1, ASV). Now, let us look at all of that.

Jesus used the birth process to describe how people are to be saved (John 3:1-5). The birth of a child requires the seed of

the man being planted in the woman, then the woman "brings forth" (the literal meaning of "birth") that child. When the woman conceives, the seed has been planted, and a child is "*begotten*." Now look at 1 John 5:1 again: when one believes in Christ, that one is "*begotten of God*." That is the work of the Spirit in the new birth—to plant the seed that results in begetting.

But there must still be the actual birth, the bringing forth of the new life. Now look at the role which water plays: "*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*" (Rom. 6:3-4). Note that the Scripture says that when one is baptized "*into Christ*," he begins the "*new life*." That is the result of the new birth! As the apostle Paul wrote later, "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*" (2 Cor. 5:17). When one is led by the Holy Spirit (through the word) to be baptized into Christ, he is thus "*born of water and the Spirit*."

That is why Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). When one believes, he is "*begotten of God*." When he is baptized, he is "*brought forth*" as a new creature "*in Christ*." What Jesus taught in John 3:5 is exactly what He taught in Mark 16:16.

The Vine And The Branches

TOM MOORE

In chapters 13-17 of the gospel account of John, inspiration records Jesus' last gathering with His disciples before His death. During these last few hours our Lord prepares His disciples for their appointed agony, and answers many of their questions. The Lamb of God informed them of their future work and promised them a Comforter. The Christ wanted His disciples to understand that He was about to be crucified and that He would live even after dying. Jesus made it known that they would suffer persecution. Jesus said all these things to prepare them—to keep

them from falling away. Before Jesus and His disciples started their ascent from the upper room to the Mount of Olives, Jesus proclaimed the parable of the vine and the branches (John 15: 1-8). With these words Jesus uses an analogy to help them, and souls of all time, understand what our relationship to Him ought to be.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). Jesus is saying He is the real and genuine vine. This is important because all of the nutrients come through the vine to the branches. In the Old Testament Israel was pictured as the vine or vineyard of God (Isaiah 5: 1-7). But the nation of Israel was a degenerate vine and her prophets told her so. Opposed to this, Jesus is telling His audience that He is the true vine. God the Father is the "husbandman"—not merely a hired dresser, but the owner. As such He gives close attention to the vine. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). The branch that does not bear fruit is taken away—it is severed from the vine.; Since the branches represent individual Christians (John 15:5), we are instructed that to be pleasing to God we must bear fruit—or be severed from God. The branch that does not bear fruit is "purged," or pruned. Fruit bearing branches are cleansed by teaching, training, and discipline and they grow to produce even more fruit. The more fruit we bear the more we are pruned by the word of God to produce more fruit.

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Here for a moment, Jesus drops the analogy and refers to the spiritual state of His disciples in the upper room.. They were "clean" from their past sins, yet needed continuous cleansing to remain justified. To apply this to the analogy, the disciples needed regular pruning to maintain their highest efficiency. The cleansing was done by means of the word. It is through obedience to God's word they were able to obtain forgiveness. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:22-23).

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). Jesus here sets forth the condition for cleansing and fruit bearing—"abide in me." "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). As the life of the branch depends on its connection to the vine, so our spiritual life is wholly dependant on our connection with the True Vine. Abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us can only occur as we live wholly by the word of God—obedience is the key!

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). This is the result of not abiding in Christ! Notice, Jesus said, "If a man abide not in me"—A MAN—not a church. This has reference to individual Christians—not to denominations. If we are not abiding in Christ we will be cast forth. Those that are severed from Christ are ultimately cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). To "abide" in Christ is not only to be in His church, but is to live in close communion and fellowship with Jesus. The promise for those in Christ: "ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." But we must ask according to His will (1 John 5: 14-15). Those in the vine do not ask for forbidden things, and realize that God will answer our request in a way that is best for us.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8). Fruit bearing is a proof of discipleship (Matthew 7: 15-20). As faithful disciples, we bring glory to God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5: 16).

Are you in the True Vine? Are you bringing glory to God by your obedience to the True Vine?

The Strait And Narrow Way

J. C. WATKINS

The general thinking today is that all people are going to heaven. People say, God is a loving God and He is not going to condemn anyone to eternal punishment. Some believe that if they live a good moral life and be honest in their dealings with others that will be pleasing to God and they will go to heaven. There are many different ideas among people concerning how one is saved from the awful penalty of sin, but few really go to the Bible to search the scriptures concerning what God says about how one is saved and can expect to live eternally with Him in heaven.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He told the Jews, *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life"* (John 5:39-40). Those today who expect that all people will be saved and that no one will be eternally lost are like the Jews of Jesus' day, they will not come to Him to see what He teaches concerning who will be in heaven and who will be lost!

THE SCRIPTURE REVEALS TWO GATES

Jesus said, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14). Contrary to man's thinking that everyone is going to heaven. Jesus teaches that many have entered the gate that leads to destruction. What is the destruction that He is speaking of? Searching the scriptures reveals that Christ is coming again and answers the question concerning eternal destruction. Christ will come, *"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power"* (II Thessalonians 1:8-9). The wide gate leads to eternal separation

from God and the only way to escape that destruction is to enter the strait and narrow gate that leads to heaven. Which gate have you entered?

OBEDIENCE IS THE KEY TO THE STRAIT GATE

II Thessalonians 1:8 quoted above teaches that one must know God and obey the gospel to enter the strait gate. We come to know God through His wonderful revelation to mankind, the Bible. The Bible reveals God's great love for us in letting Christ die on the cross to save us from the penalty of sin (Romans 5:6-8). The scripture teaches, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"* (Hebrews 5:8-9). The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power unto salvation (Romans 1:16), but that gospel has no power in one's life until it is obeyed!

CONCLUSION

The Lord and Savior who died on the cross to save mankind from the penalty of sin clearly teaches that all people will not go to heaven. Good, moral and upright people cannot go to heaven without obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are concerned for the souls of men! We don't want anyone to be lost! Therefore, we do all we can to persuade people to enter the strait gate by obeying Christ to be saved and one day go home to live with Him eternally in heaven!

Let the Bible Speak about Worship

Prove all things . . .

Hold fast to that which is good

The New Testament speaks of three kinds of worship. First, there is ignorant worship. Paul describes the people at Mars Hill as worshipping ignorantly since they were bowing down to idols. (Acts 17:22-31). Second, there is vain worship. This is worship that is useless or void since it is based on the teaching of men.

Christ said, *"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matthew 15.9). And third, there is true worship. This is the kind that God wants. Christ stressed this when He said, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth."* (John 4-24). Please notice that God is to be the object of our worship. Although he does not force us to worship Him, if we choose to do so then we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. To worship Him in spirit means to worship Him with all sincerity and with the proper understanding. To worship Him in truth suggests that we must worship Him according to the teaching of the New Testament, which is truth. This is the only way our worship can be true and acceptable.

Since we must worship God in truth, then we must discover what the truth demands of us. And to discover this, we must turn to the New Testament itself. For surely if the Lord would have us to worship according to the truth, then He has revealed in the truth what He requires. Now in studying the New Testament, we learn that there are at least five distinct things or acts in which the early Christians engaged as worship to God.

1. They assembled to study God's word. In Acts 20.7, we have Paul preaching to the assembly. Christ taught that we should search the scriptures. (John 5:39) And Paul commanded Timothy to study. (2 Timothy 2.15.) Surely we could not picture a worship service without a period of Bible study. This is only right since it is God's way of speaking to us.

2. They assembled to pray to God. We read that the early Christians *"...continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2.42.) Since Paul said to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5.17), then this would surely include worship as well. And Christ taught that man should always pray. (Luke 18.1.) This is man's way of speaking to God and certainly we could not picture a worship service without including this part of it.

3. They assembled to sing praise to God. There are several verses to support this, but we'll consider the following one first: *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."* (Ephesians 5.19). Also consider Colossians 3.16. Note too that

there are two types of music: Vocal and Mechanical. In the scriptures the Lord designates vocal music as the type of music he wants in worship. *Hebrews 13.15* makes it plain that the Lord desires the fruits of our lips to praise Him rather than a cold, lifeless, heartless, mechanical instrument of music. Remember, it is the Lord that is to be pleased.

4. They assembled to partake of the Lord's Supper. In *Matthew 26.26-28*, Christ instituted this supper by saying that the bread represents His body and the cup represents his blood. Paul says in *1 Corinthians 11* that the Christian is to partake of the bread and the cup in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ. In *Acts 20.7*, we have an example of the early Christians meeting on the first day of the week to break bread. And in *Hebrews 10.25*, we are warned that we are not to forsake this assembly.

5. They assembled to give as they had been prospered. Paul exhorted the church at Corinth, *"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."* (*1 Corinthians 16.2.*) Please keep in mind that they were to do this on the first day of the week and that they were to give as they had been prospered. No certain amount was set. It was a free will thing, but they were expected to give if they had prospered, and it was their duty to determine how much they had been prospered.

So this is what the scriptures reveal. The early Christians met each Lord's Day to worship in this manner. If we are Christians, can we do any less?

The Holy Spirit In Conversion

LEON COLE

There seems to be less understanding about the Holy Spirit than almost any religious topic. Many have reduced Him to a mere idea or vague concept. Others view Him as a phantom whose influence is better felt than told. The Bible teaches He is one of the three persons of the Godhead.

He is first mentioned in the account of creation at Genesis 1:2. Believers are to be baptized in His name (Matthew 28:19). Before Jesus left the apostles were promised another comforter "even the Spirit of truth." (John 14: 16-17.) These and many other passages identify Him as being a person along with God, the Father and Christ, the Son.

The scriptures also give the Holy Spirit the attributes of a person. He teaches. "But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will—send in my name, he shall teach you all things." (John 14: 26.) He speaks. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly." (1 Timothy 4: 1.) He may be grieved. "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God." (Ephesians 4:30.) He has knowledge. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 2:11.) He helps. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." (Romans 8: 26.) Who is capable of teaching, speaking, knowing, helping and being grieved but a person?

If the Holy Spirit is a person it would seem that He would influence another. It is often claimed that the Holy Spirit influences people by sending them into convulsions. Some claim outbursts of uncontrolled laughter to be the work of the Holy Spirit. This is hardly the way an intelligent person would seek to get another to buy a product or cease a bad habit. One would use words that could be understood by another.

In Acts chapter 2 there is a rather clear picture given of how the Holy Spirit convicts and converts sinners. At Acts 2: 2-4 it is said, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." The pronouns "they" and "them" can refer to only the last previous noun which is used which is "apostles." (Acts 1:26). The apostles then received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We then note that the Holy Spirit influenced those who were unsaved that day by guiding the apostles as they spoke. Verse 4 says they spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. All they spoke then was by the inspiration of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, through the medium of the apostles, told the people that day what they had been doing that was wrong. The message of the Spirit was so convincing they were cut to the heart. They cried out, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" "Then Peter said unto 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." Three thousand were moved by the message and were thus convicted by the Holy Spirit.

When people heard the preaching of these words they were converted by these words, they were converted by the Holy Spirit! When they rejected the words of inspired men, they rejected the Holy Spirit! Stephen, the first Christian martyr said to those who killed him, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51.)

At Acts 8: 26-39 we have the record of the conversion of the man from Ethiopia. All would agree he was converted by the Holy Spirit. But notice how the Holy Spirit converted him. Phillip preached unto him Jesus, (verse 35.) The Ethiopian then desired baptism. Phillip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." The Ethiopian then made a declaration of his faith and was baptized. The Holy Spirit used Phillip as a spokesman to deliver the message of salvation to this man. The Holy Spirit never spoke to the sinner directly but always by the preached word.

Does the Spirit touch the heart of men today? He surely does. He uses the Word as he always has. "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even o the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.) When one accepts the teaching of the Bible and obeys its command he is led by the Spirit! It was the Spirit that revealed these teachings to the writers of the New Testament.

The Bible says, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans 8:16.) The Spirit, then, bears witness, testifies and gives evidence with our spirit and not to our spirit, it is needful for our spirits to respond to and testify with, before we can become children of God. How does

the Holy Spirit testify? Like any witness, He speaks words that can be understood. The Holy Spirit speaks word testifying how we become children of God. "But 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." (Hebrews 11:6.) The Spirit testifying through the Word we must repent and be baptized. (Acts 2:38.) Our spirits must bear witness by saying we have been baptized for the remission of sins. Then it is that our spirits bear witness with the holy Spirit that we are children of God. There is no other way that God's children can know their duty to Him.

It should be remembered that it is a dangerous thing to reject and resist the teachings of the Word of God. Still, we have those who do as they wait for the Spirit to come in a mysterious way. We urge all to study the Bible, the voice of the Spirit and do what it says. The promise if we do, is to live with God in Heaven.

Christ And The Church

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Nearly two thousand years ago our blessed Lord promised to build His glorious church. When Jesus uttered these noble words of Matt. 16:18, the demons in hell trembled: *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:18). The church is built upon the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, which Peter had just confessed -not upon the primacy of the apostle which is never confessed in Scripture! Peter himself made it clear in Acts 4:41-12 and 1 Pet. 2:5-7 that Christ is *"the chief cornerstone"* upon which Christianity is solidly built. Paul stated clearly that Jesus is the Rock, and the solid foundation is none other than our Savior (1 Cor. 3:11; 10:4).

In an exquisite passage of pathos and beauty, Paul wrote, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, about Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25-33). *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word . . . For*

this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church." By way of prophetic application, the psalmist pungently stated, *"Except the LORD build the house, They labor in vain that build it"* (Psa. 127:1).

In Acts 20:28 and Eph. 3:21, we learn valuable lessons concerning the church which Jesus promised to build: *"Feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood . . . Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever."* First of all, since Christ purchased the church with His own blood, it truly belongs to Him. Secondly, God is glorified in that church forever through Jesus Christ. As a summation point, drawn from these verses, we clearly see that no human religion could ever compare with the church Jesus built! As E. E. Hewitt powerfully wrote:

*For Christ and the church
Let our voice ring.
Let us honor the name
Of our own blessed King.*

In that famous passage of Matt. 16, we learn that even the bars of death could not hold the Son of God. Up from the grave by the power of Jehovah our Savior arose (Rom. 1:4) and conquered death (John 11:24-26). He had defeated Satan (John 12:31-33) and, *"When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men"* (Eph. 4:8) to grant us victory over the grave (1 Cor. 15:54-57), *"Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Peter made it very clear on the day of Pentecost that our Redeemer had *"burst asunder the bands of death"* (Acts 2:24). Destroying the power which the Devil had once held over mankind because of sin (Rom. 5:12; Heb. 2:14), the One Who was born of a virgin (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4) had once for all time crushed Satan's power!

*He arose a victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever with the saints to reign.*

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