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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

To what church was the Lord adding daily those who were being saved? (Acts 2:47). There are today hundreds of churches all over the world. Churches which are called by many different names and follow different teachings or doctrines. The church, in the Bible is also identified as the body of Christ in Ephesians 1:22 & 23. And it says that there is one body. (Eph. 4:4). Earlier, Christ, when He was on earth, had promised that He would build His church. Listen to Him, as He spoke to one of his apostles, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18). Whose church did Christ say. He would build, when there was no church on earth? "I will build My church." Was the promise of Christ. Evidently, between this promise in Matt. 16:18 and Acts 2:47 where we read, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved," Christ had built His church. And without any doubt He was adding those who were being saved to His church. Is He doing the same today? Sure, He is. Because He had said that His church will exist forever and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. Even though human teachings and doctrines and churches are present everywhere today, but Christ's church has always, since its creation, existed

and will continue to exist.

How does one recognise the true church today in this world of multiplicity of churches? Here are given a few marks of identification of the true church:

The church Christ built is recognised by His name. He said, He would build His church. Where there are several congregations of the Church of Christ, they are called, Churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). Christ Himself is the head of His church. (Eph. 122, 23; Col. 1:18). No man, human being, is heading the church of Christ. He is the head, and all congregations of His church on earth are independent. There may be elders appointed from within a congregation, provided there are men present in that church who meets the qualifications of elders as given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:5-9). These men are chosen to provide leadership in a church. Women are never chosen to be elders. Neither do they preach or teach publicly. Men provide leadership in everything, not women, as the Bible commands (1 Tim. 2:11,12 & 1: Cor. 14: 34,35). There are no Reverends, Fathers or Pastor incharge in the church of Christ. (Read Psalm. 111:9; Matt. 23:9). Men who preach or teach or provide leadership in the church are not clothed in special clothing or gowns, as Jewish priests did in the Old Testament.

When the church come together on Sunday, the first day of the week to worship God, you will hear singing without the accompaniment of any mechanical instrument of music. Because the Bible commands singing. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15). There are no choirs. All in the church are encouraged to sing. The Lord's Supper is observed every first day of the week, as the Bible teaches (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-29). A collection is also taken on each Sunday (1 Cor. 16:1,2). There will be prayers led by different members of the church and one or more lessons from the Bible are presented. There are no prayer books or any other books are used. Only the Bible is read and used during the worship of God.

People everywhere on earth still become members of the church of Christ in the same way as they did in the beginning. Remember, it is His church, Christ's church. As He added to the church daily those who were being saved, He has continued doing this since then, and still does the same today, that is, He adds to His church those who are saved. Christ has not changed His plans. This is the meaning of Hebrews 13:8, where it says, Jesus

Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Now what did the people do in the beginning to be saved? Let us go to the same chapter of the book of Acts, Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." What had they done to be saved? When they had asked the apostles "What shall we do?" We read, "Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37, 38). Verse 41 of the same chapter then says, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." People do not become member of the church of Christ today by being voted into the church or by filling a membership form or by subscribing. No one joins church of Christ. But Christ adds to the church those who believe in Him and repent of their sins and are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. This is, again, what the Bible teaches.

Great Treasure

J.C. CHOATE

Jesus gave many parables to define and explain the kingdom or the church that was to be established. Two of these are very similar. Jesus said, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it"* (Matthew 13:44-46).

In today's terminology, a parable would be classified as an illustration. It involves taking something earthly, something of a material nature, and drawing from it a spiritual lesson. In the two parables just quoted, Jesus spoke of the kingdom or church being like a treasure hidden in a field. An earthly treasure is something very important, precious as silver, gold, or jewels, something that is very expensive. In this case the treasure is something that was hidden in a field and had gone unobserved. Others did not see it, or else when they saw it, they did not recognize what it was, and the value of it, and therefore they passed over it. But either by

searching, or just casually coming across it, this particular person finds the treasure. Seeing it, and being aware of its great value, he hides it again and with joy he goes and sells all that he has so he can buy that field. Once the field is bought, the treasure becomes his to deal with as he chooses.

The second parable is much like the first one, except in this case this man is looking for a pearl of great price. He is not simply looking for a pearl, just any pearl, but he wants a *special* pearl, one that is worth more than all the rest. He is a merchant, a businessman, and he knows what he is looking for. His search is rewarded with success. Once he finds the choice pearl, he goes and sells all that he has so that he can buy that pearl of great price. It is now his to do with it as he wishes. He can keep it, show it to others, or sell it and make a big profit.

Now we are all familiar with such stories, of those who go out into the world and buy real estate and sell it for profit, and become rich. Or it could be coming up with an oil well, buying a tract of timber and selling it, building a Wal-Mart and a Sam's, or a Microsoft, and other profitable ventures. Why is it that some succeed in these areas but most do not? Well, it is according to what you are looking for, the vision that you have, what you are willing to put into the search and the achievement. Bottom line, most people actually are pretty well satisfied with where they are and with what they have. They, therefore, seldom move a great deal, either up or down, and they seldom find any "treasure".

Spiritually, the kingdom, the church, God's truth is that treasure. It is out there in the world and always has been there. It is not just *any* church, *some* church, or *one of the churches*. If that is all one is interested in, he will never find the real treasure.

But consider the facts concerning the kingdom or the Lord's church, the one we read about in the Bible. Ever since it was established in Jerusalem by our Lord (Acts 2), it has existed somewhere in the world right on up to the present time, and it will continue to exist for all time and eternity (Luke 1:33 and 1 Corinthians 15:24).

In spite of that fact, and as clearly and distinctly as the church is described in the scripture, the masses never find it. Why? Because the majority are not deeply interested, or they are not looking, and they wouldn't recognize it for what it is even if they did find it. The masses of humanity go in every direction, and look in every place, and remain blind to the real treasure, not wanting

to accept it for what it is, being easily deceived, and ending up settling for a counterfeit treasure — a church *begun* by men, *governed* by men, and *living under promises no greater than their founders themselves can fulfill*. Traditions of men and man-made religion are the order of the day. What is called treasure is no treasure at all. The religions of men are not worth one's effort, devotion, and the great price that is paid for following them.

Jesus said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? And in thy name have cast out devils ? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

Can we, today, find that great treasure of which Jesus spoke? We can if we will but look for it, if we will read and study God's word, with a deep and abiding love of the truth. It is that plain and simple. When the treasure is sincerely sought, found, and the value of it is recognized, the searcher will be willing to give up any and everything standing between him and the treasure, and he will be willing to do whatever is necessary to obey God and obtain the treasure. He will be willing to believe in the Lord, repent of his sins, to confess Christ as the Son of God, and to be baptized to wash away his sins, to become a member of the Lord's church. No, he will not gripe, complain, and argue with the Lord or with anyone else about these matters. His attitude will be, "Lord, you command, and I will obey." Then when he has found that treasure and made it his own, he will want to keep the treasure by doing the Lord's bidding in all things. Will there be any rewards? Jesus said, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."* (Matthew 6:33).

Just imagine finally having that greatest treasure: the kingdom, the church, the truth, resulting in a saved soul and the hope of eternal life! How wonderful to know that the owner of the treasure stands on the *promises of God* because he has done God's will. How wonderful to know that he is a member of the one church that Christ promised to build (Matthew 16:18), the one bride for which Christ died (Ephesians 5:25), the body of people of which He is the saviour (Ephesians 5:23), and the church for which he is coming back one day, to deliver it up to God where we shall ever be with the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:23,24).

What is your treasure? Have you found the treasure Jesus talked about? Have you made that treasure your own? You can, and must, if you want to have the treasure of eternal life.

Are You Getting Old?

FRANCIS DAVID

Many of us are advancing in age. We are growing old. As the time pass by we, become the victims of old age. If you have Bible then I would urge you to go through the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 12, and there you will see that what the old age is and how short the life of man is. The wise man Solomon was a preacher and from his mouth we see these words come as he speaks to the people who are advancing in age. He says: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them." The wise man is saying here that we need to remember our Creator while we are still young, but a lot of time we see, while we are young we are not concerned about God and spiritual things. A lot of people think that the youth is to enjoy and the old age is to meditate on spiritual matters. This is a wrong concept. The preacher here beautifully picturize the old age and the fate of man.

He says: "The keeper of the house tremble. Keepers of the house are hands and we know and we must have seen that how the hands of old people are shaky. You can notice their hands trembling. An the strong men are bent. What are these strong men? These are the legs. The grinders cease because they are few. You can understand what these grinders are. These are the teeth and we know as a person grows old he or she loses teeth the grinders. And those that look through windows are dimmed. These windows are our eyes, and we know as we grow old our eyes get week and we are changing glasses from time to time. The doors on the street are shut. What are these doors? These are human ears. We are not able to hear well because our hearing is getting weak as we grow old. When the sound of grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird. By this we understand that the old one don't get enough sleep, they often, get up during sleep and their sleep is disturbed. And all the daughters of song

are brought low. This shows their inability to sing, they can't sing well. Then the wise says, that they are afraid of what is high and that shows the fear of falling. They don't like to walk fast because they might fall, and terrors are in the way. These shows that when the old are away from their homes there is always a fear of accidents and falling. Then he says, the almond tree blossoms, this tree when it is blossom turns to gray or white. This means when a person gets old his hairs turn gray. Can you imagine how beautifully the wise man gives the picture of advance age? Further he says, that the grasshoppers drags itself along. This tells us that their inability to move or lifting heavy objects, and desire fails, because man goes to his eternal home . . . the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:3-7).

Through this, we understand the brevity of life. The preacher encourage us all to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. Next time when you see an old man just think that you are going to be the same one day. Elderly people are reminding us again and again that we will not be here forever. Life is passing by quickly Death and Judgment will be soon upon us and we are going to face the judgment. Are we wise enough to think about God and His righteousness? If we are wise we will remember our God and His righteousness. What about you friends? Are you taking life seriously? Just think about it and if there are flaws and wrongs in your lives, we must correct ourselves and be reconciled to God and walk with Him daily faithfully.

Knowing and Following

THOMAS DOHLING

Hosea 6:3 "Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

The Holy Spirit through the prophet Hosea has a profound message for us in this passage. The call is to "press on to know the LORD." Many of us do not seem to desire to grow in the knowledge of God. Many Christians are living empty lives since they have neither seen nor grasped the heavenly picture presented in the God's Book. Religion to them consists of

repeating the same prayers used for years, and reading a prescribed portion of Scripture. Sadly, such lives are deficient of the joy and gladness that is found only in knowing the Lord. Such people cannot appropriate David's comparison between himself and the hunted deer that pants for the water-brook (Psalm 42:1,2), or our Lord's blessing for those that "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matthew 5:6).

However, with many of us, there is a longing for a further advance to know the LORD. Like the apostle Paul, we are pressing toward the mark, though we lose sight of it many, many times! We are like the blind man whose sight was gradually restored by our LORD. First, he saw men as walking trees, dimly appreciating the glory of perfect sight; but soon, as Jesus' dear hands touched him again, he saw clearly. Is there anyone reading this who does not long for this clear sight, this knowledge of God! Let us not desist in our quest, but follow on! When the last lesson is learned, the last and deepest surrender taken, the final act of faith accomplished, the partition will remove, and we shall know only JOY, deep in the depths of our souls as we have unrestricted, face to face view of our LORD (1 Corinthians 13:12).

God's ways are sure. "His going out is sure as the dawn; He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth." To some, the heavenly picture suddenly unfolds itself. However, human sense causes them to hide from the spiritual reality. To others, as we partake of the emblems - the unleavened bread and the grape juice - which remind us of our Lord's sacrifice, we get a vision of the love of Jesus and we are more than satisfied; we become confident of our salvation and acceptance by God in Jesus.

At any given time as we meditate on God's word and seek His ways, a heavenly door may open before us if we knock and seek earnestly! We may suddenly look up and see His face and exclaim with Paul: "The Lord is at hand!" We shall see His hand beckoning to us; and we shall arise and follow into that world of reality and love that is so near, but sometimes seems so far!

May each of us "press on to know the LORD." Let us rise up and follow Him!

Don't Trust in Things that Vanish

CLEM THURMAN

Life is a pursuit, but many times we pursue the wrong things. The Bible says, *"What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* (Jas. 4:14).

In defining our goals and purposes in life, we usually seek after things that offer us security and durability. We want things that bring us pleasure and profit, but we also want them to last. James points out that even life is *"a vapor, that vanisheth away."* Solomon, recording in Ecclesiastes his search for purpose in life, showed that riches, entertainment, work and education are all *"vanity under the sun."* He then summed up, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"* (Eccle. 12:13). What a tragedy is any life which is lived for the things that vanish, for such a life can have no real substance.

MATERIAL POSSESSIONS WILL DISAPPEAR

Radio, television, magazines and newspapers, bombard us with the modern definition of success: wealth and power. If one is not making lots of money, he is a failure. If he is wealthy, he is a success — no matter what failings of character he may demonstrate in other areas of his life. Automobiles are advertised with the trappings of that "aura of success." You don't see the new car pictured in front of a dilapidated shack, but in front of a mansion with perfectly manicured lawn and shrubs. The same idea "sells" clothes, furniture, toothpaste, cigarettes, liquor, etc. And far too many people buy into that premise of what constitutes success.

Jesus said, *"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things—which he possesseth"* (Lk. 12:15). We need to learn that truth. And we need to hear again the story the Lord told in the following verses of the man who trusted in his riches while forgetting his duty to God. *"God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God"* (Lk. 12:20-21). But we don't learn, do we? We continue to seek for "material things" and measure the success of our lives by them. Why don't

we learn the wisdom of 1 Tim. 6:6-10? *"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content. But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare. . . for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."* We need to learn, *"We can carry nothing out."*

Jesus, giving up the riches of heaven to walk this earth as a man, put material things in perspective when He said, *"Foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"* (Matt. 8:20). He knew what real riches were, but He lived on earth without the material things which we feel are so important. And He tells us, *"Lay up treasures in heaven"* (Matt. 6:20). The spiritual things are the things that will last forever. Thus, Christians *"look not at the things seen, but at the things not seen: for the things seen are temporal, but the things not seen are eternal"* (2 Cor. 4:18).

POPULARITY AND PRESTIGE WILL DISAPPEAR

It is natural to want to be loved. We all do. No one wants to be despised, hated, disliked. But sometimes we forget to put the praise of other people in its proper place. When others speak well of us, we need to be careful: *"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall"* (Prov. 16:18). Such flattery can lead us to compromise with principle in order to receive or retain popularity. Even religious people with real conviction can get swept up in this trap: *"Even of the rulers many believed on him [Jesus]; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God"* (Jno. 12:42-43). How sad! They knew what they should do, but refused because their popularity would suffer!

Lest we become *"wise in our own conceits"* (Rom. 12:16), we need to go back and read again the 38th chapter of Job. When we begin to think of ourselves as important, let us answer the questions which God put to Job. *"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no*

further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" If we consider the majesty of God, we will have no room for pride; and the praise of men cannot sway us from the course the Lord wants us to walk. What others think of us is important, but it is not all-important - and popularity disappears. What is really important is the Lord's approval: *"It is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. . . He that judgeth me is the Lord"* (1 Cor. 4:3-4).

THE PLEASURES OF SIN SOON DISAPPEAR

I have heard people contend that there really is no pleasure in sin. But that is patently false. If there were no pleasure in sin, there would be no temptation to commit sin. Moses had to make a choice between helping his people, Israel, or being true to those who reared him, the Egyptians. *"By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Heb. 11:24-25). Yes, there are pleasures in sin — but they are only *"for a season."* The pleasure of sin is like the vapor that soon disappears, then only remorse is left. Judas must have felt great anticipation of the pleasures the thirty pieces of silver would bring him, but he never enjoyed the money at all (Matt. 27:3-5).

Demas was a faithful fellow-minister and companion of the apostle Paul. Then the apostle writes of him in 2 Tim. 4:10, *"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."* Clear warning is given, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"* (1 Jno. 2:15), but for some reason Demas ignored that warning. Maybe he felt the tugging of *"the pleasures of sin,"* and was tempted to partake. I've often wondered how Demas must have felt a few years later!? The pleasure of sin is now gone, he is faced with the consequences of his misdeeds, and for the rest of his life has to live with the realization of what he threw away - and for what! Our prayer should echo the words of Gal. 1:4, *"Deliver us from this present evil world."*

Temptations are strong, and frequent, for all of us. The devil will "dress up" immorality in the most attractive garb he can, he will make lying and cheating "popular." But before succumbing to the temptation, think of your relationship with God. Think of that relationship an hour after the sinful deed, a day after, a year after. And eternity. No one can deny there is pleasure in sin. But it is

only "for a season." And the season is too short. No sin, no matter the pleasure it brings at the time, is worth losing eternity! Don't give your soul for a "vapor" that quickly disappears.

OUR LIVES ON EARTH SOON DISAPPEAR

"But we have to make a living" is the cry which many use to excuse the fact that they are not serving the Lord. But look again to what James wrote: *"Go to now; ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* (Jas. 4:13-14). We need to recognize that our lives belong to God (Rom. 14:8), and we live only according to His mercy and His will. And we need to live constantly with the knowledge that we will die. *"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment"* (Heb. 9:27). Solomon wrote, *"The living know that they shall die. . . Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it"* (Eccle. 9:5; 12:7). When that happens, we face God to be judged for *"the things done in the body"* (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10,12).

A few weeks ago, I stood in Jerusalem and viewed the sites of the excavation of that ancient city. That city has been leveled and re-built at least a dozen times! Excavations, and the Bible, reveal a city that dates back to the time of Abraham (Gen. 14:18). There has hardly been a more important city in the history of the world. I could not help but think, as I considered this city, how fleeting my time on earth really is — and how puny I am! So many important people have lived, and died, in that city. Now all physical sign of them is gone, buried under sand and rubble. And who will remember me fifty years from now? If I live my *"three score and ten,"* that seventy years is but a "vapor" when compared with the stream of time. And time, itself, is nothing when compared with eternity!

Rather than build our hopes on *"a vapor, that vanisheth away,"* let us seek those things with substance. Paul wrote, *"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward"* (Rom. 8:18). Material things, even this earth (2 Pet. 3:10), will vanish away. Only the spiritual values are eternal. When we *"look not at the things seen, but at the things not seen,"* our hope is

sure: *"For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens"* (2 Cor. 5:1). That is not a vapor that disappears, but hope with substance: eternal.

Cry for Mercy

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Throughout the Scriptures we learn of the unsparing God. The world of Noah's day was destroyed because of sin (Gen. 6) and only eight righteous souls were spared (1 Pet. 3:20). A rainbow was placed in the sky following the flood during the time of Noah (Gen. 9) to forever prove that Jehovah punishes the wicked, rewards the righteous and will keep His promises. To teach that God is so gracious that He will not overthrow sinners, and punish them, is to deny what the Bible reveals as to the balanced nature of His character. It is true that *"God is love"* (1 Jno. 4:8), but it is also true that *"Our God is a consuming fire"* and *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Heb. 12:29; 10:31).

When Abraham could not find ten righteous souls in Sodom, that city was destroyed with God's fire (Gen. 18; 2 Pet. 2; Jude 7). These facts remind us of the future punishment for the disobedient and wicked. Of the men of Israel above age 20 when they left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter the promised land! In fact, on their trek from Egypt to Canaan, 23,000 perished in one day because of sin (1 Cor. 10:1-12). God did not spare the angels that sinned (2 Pet. 2:4-9), He did not spare Uzzah (2 Sam. 6), Korah (Num. 16) nor the sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1-2). To argue that God is so merciful that no one will be punished is to war against the clarity of these examples which are given for our learning (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6,11). The entire concept that proclaims, in essence, that sin does not have eternal consequences makes the death of Jesus Christ at Golgotha relatively unimportant, if not completely unnecessary!

According to the Bible, who will go to hell? Let us notice some which the Scriptures list.

1. Those *"that know not God"* and those who *"obey not the*

- gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thes. 1:8).*
2. Those who are uncaring, self-centered and fail to show compassion (Matt. 25:31- 46).
 3. The *"fearful, and unbelieving"* and those who are immoral (Rev. 21:8) will miss heaven.
 4. Jesus, in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), reflects the sad end of those who refuse to serve God to the full measure of their ability. To live beneath our privileges is a grievous blunder.
 5. Those who, once saved, return to the world have a bleak future indeed. It would be better never to know the truth than to turn back from it (2 Pet. 2:20-22; Rev. 3:1-5). Our names, once entered into the Lamb's Book of Life, can be removed from that Book because of our impurity and indifference.
 6. Those who persist in a sinful life cannot go where Jesus is (Jno. 8:21). To *"sin unto death"* (1 Jno. 5:16) is to die in an unpardonable state. When we harden our hearts (Heb. 3:13-15; Zech. 7:11-14), we become *"past feeling"* (Eph. 4:19) and face a dreadful eternity.
 7. Those who call upon the name of the Lord in vain (Jas. 1:26) by an hypocrisy that boasts but will not obey. Jesus is still asking of all such folk, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Lk. 6:46).

Is Baptism Essential?

PAUL HOOVER

I remember hearing a story about a terrible accident on a construction site. A crew of men was working on the roof of a seven-story building. Prior to the job, the crew was given some rules of safety harness, which was to be hooked up as soon as crew members reached the roof. It was to be worn at all times while they remained on the roof.

One day, while working on the roof, one of the men stumbled and fell over the edge. He fell 100 feet to the asphalt below and was killed instantly. The investigation which followed revealed

the fact that that particular man never hooked up his safety harness. The question was asked, "Why did he not take the proper safety precautions?" Of course he could not answer that question because he was dead. Did he not believe safety precautions were necessary? Did he just not want to take the time to hook up his harness? Well, we cannot answer those questions, but one thing is certain, omission or negligence can be deadly.

This type of omission or neglect often occurs among people who seek salvation. Some believe that baptism is not essential to salvation. Though there are many arguments people use in an attempt to support this erroneous belief, we will examine two: (1) There is not enough scriptural support to validate baptism as essential to salvation; (2) One cannot be saved by water.

THE ESSENTIALITY OF BAPTISM IN THE SCRIPTURES

First, answer these questions with an honest heart and logical thought. How many times did the Lord have to say something for it to be true? How many times in the New Testament does a command have to be given for it to be binding? Surely we can all agree that if the Lord said something one time it is just as true as if he said it fifty times. We should just as surely agree that if a command is set forth in the New Testament one time it is just as binding as if it were set forth fifty times. Does every verse in the New Testament which deals with salvation discuss every step in God's great plan of salvation? The answer is no. Is it necessary that every thing pertaining to the plan of salvation be found in every verse? The answer again is no. The reason being that, though it may be discussed more than once, once commanded it is binding. The Word of God must be understood in its entirety, not limited to selected verses.

The following command is absolutely binding upon followers of the Lord, therefore, the conditions set forth are realities for all those who seek salvation. The Lord "... said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'" (Mark 16:15,16.) If your honest conclusion is that the Lord only had to say something once for it to be true, and that a command need be set forth in the New Testament only once for it to be binding, you can already see how clear the New Testament is on the essentiality of baptism. The Lord himself said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

Since the word baptism means immersion, it is obvious by what the Lord said that immersion is essential to salvation.

In what is one to be immersed? The answer is evident in Acts 8:36-38. "And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." The Lord's teaching should not be misunderstood. If one is to be saved he cannot omit or neglect being immersed in water.

Some people try to negate this teaching of the Lord by use of the phrase, "... he who does not believe will be condemned." They argue that since it only says those who do not believe will be condemned, and it does not say those who are not baptized will be condemned, that baptism is not essential after all. This completely ignores what the Lord said in the first part of the passage. Besides, it was not necessary for the Lord to say he who is not baptized will be condemned. One who does not believe will not be baptized. Though I do not remember where I heard it, the following helps clear up his point. Think about this statement. "He who eats and digests will live; but he who does not eat will die." It is not necessary to say, "He who does not digest will die," because he cannot digest if he has not first eaten. One cannot be baptized if he has not first believed. So, this teaching of the Lord stands, therefore, baptism is absolutely essential to salvation.

Notice this understanding on the part of New Testament converts. We have already looked at Acts 8:36-38. In that passage, when was the eunuch baptized? Once he believed, he was baptized as soon as they came to an adequate water supply. Saul or Paul had been a great persecutor of the Lord's church. When he became a believer, when was Paul baptized? Bear in mind the fact that Paul had not eaten or drunk in three days. The Bible says he was baptized "forthwith." Only then did he eat and drink. (Acts 9:1-19.) When he believed, when was the Philippian Jailer baptized? Acts 16:33 says that he was baptized the "same hour of the night" or "straightway."

We see in all of these examples a true sense of urgency to be baptized. Why were they so urgent? Because they knew through various teachers the truth that the Lord taught in Mark

16:15,16. One cannot be saved without being baptized. There were about three thousand souls added to the church on the day of Pentecost, but they were not added until after they were baptized. (Acts 2:41.) Baptism is clearly essential to salvation.

ONE CANNOT BE SAVED BY WATER

One cannot be saved by water, but neither can one be saved without water. I need to explain that. If one could be saved merely by immersion in water, every scuba diver in the world would be saved even if they were atheists! It is not the water that saves, rather obedience to the will of God, and God commands immersion in water. Let's notice this principle at work in both the Old and New Testaments.

Naaman was a leper who sought out Elisha, a man of God, in order to be healed. "So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." (2 Kings 5:9-10.) This seemed like an odd cure to Naaman and he became angry. "But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." (2 Kings 5:11,12.)

What Naaman did not understand was that the power was not in the water of the river. The power was in God, and the only way Naaman could benefit from that power was to be obedient. "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:13-14.)

On one occasion Jesus saw a man who was born blind and provided him with the opportunity to have his sight restored. "... he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went away therefore,

and washed, and came seeing." (Matthew 9:6,7.) The blind man, like Naaman, did not receive his sight from any power inherent in the water. He received his sight by the power of God's Son. He received his sight because he was obedient. Had he not obeyed, his sight would not have been restored.

So it is with baptism. The water in and of itself has no power. The opportunity of salvation is extended by God, made possible by the Lord and made known by the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. To benefit from this one must be obedient in every step of God's plan of salvation, including the essential step of baptism.

CONCLUSION

Why is this so important? Why must we concern ourselves with these details? I heard Will Montgomery put it this way. If you try to call your friend on the phone and his number is 555-1234, but you dial 555-123_, would you be connected? The answer, of course, is no. Every number in a phone number is essential. You cannot omit or neglect even one; if you do the rest are useless. God has given us one plan of salvation: hear (Acts 2:37); believe (Acts 8:36-38); repent (Acts 2:38); confess (Romans 10:9); be baptized (Mark 16:15,16); and live faithfully. (Revelation 2:10.) To omit or neglect any one of these steps renders the rest useless to one who desires salvation.

Real Wisdom, From Man Or God?

GARY C. HAMPTON

THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING

To those who are worldly minded, the preaching of the gospel is silly and absurd. To those who "are being saved" (footnote ASV) the gospel is mighty, like dynamite. The Greek word used here is dunamis as is also the case in Romans 1:16. To further show man must learn to rely upon God for knowledge which is valuable, Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14. It simply is not within the scope of man's ability to save himself. ((1 Corinthians 1:18-19; Jeremiah 10:23.)

While men became big headed over human knowledge, it was nothing compared with God's wisdom. By his wisdom, man was unable to know God, that is, his mind and character. Though man used everything at his disposal, he was unable to discover

God without divine revelation. As Paul said on Mars Hill, "So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." (Acts 17:22-31; especially 27.) Though it seemed silly to man, God revealed his will for him in the preaching of the gospel. (1 Corinthians 1:20-21.)

THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST DISPLAYS GOD'S WISDOM

Instead of gospel preaching, the Jews wanted a sign Jesus was the Messiah. McGarvey and Pendleton mention several examples of the Jews' demands for signs. (Matthew 12:38; 16:1; John 1:18,4:48.) They looked for a messiah to conquer Rome. So, Jesus' teaching and the cross was a stumbling block. They did not want to hear his kingdom was not of this world. Certainly, they did not want their messiah to die on a cross.

The Greeks rejected Christ as God's spokesman for a different reason. They wanted a greater wise man than the world had known. In their wisdom, they considered flesh, in and of itself, to be sinful. So, they could not believe God would take on human form, since that did not match up with their wisdom. (1 Corinthians 1:22-23.)

God does his calling in the message of the gospel. In his second letter to the brethren at Thessalonica, Paul wrote, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:13-14.) Those who accepted the gospel call saw Christ as a great sign and the Messiah. They saw the great knowledge needed to plan such a means of salvation. (1 Corinthians 1:24.)

While the death of Christ on Calvary may have seemed foolish to the Greeks, it turned out to be above man's wisdom. In that death, all men have a means of overcoming the grave. Similarly, Christ's death on the cross seemed to be a clear sign of weakness to the Jews. "Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save, If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.'" (Matthew 27:41-42.) In fact, his death and resurrection from the tomb was the only way to crush the head of Satan and render the grave powerless over

his followers. (1 Corinthians 1:25; Hebrews 2:14-18.)

JESUS CHRIST, WISDOM FROM GOD

So, Paul said, not many of those who would be called wise, or powerful or noblemen followed Jesus. Most uprisings are successful because the upper crust leaders join and the lowly commoners follow. Christianity appealed to the lowly and spread to those wrapped up in self. Remember, the disciples were common fisherman. (1 Corinthians 1:26.)

God, as in the case of Gideon, used means man would not use to accomplish his purposes. Thus, man finds it harder to credit the means and seeks the power behind the means, (see Psalm 8:2; James 2:5.) "God has chosen" those of lowly birth, God also chose things which are not. As Pulpit Commentary points out, the word "not" means things that men did not even think of as existing. Men thought of the cross as "base" or lowly. They thought of Christ as dead, or nonexistent, but he was chosen as the one to display God to the world instead of any other fleshly messenger. McGarvey and Pendleton say "flesh" represents ministers and instruments God uses. They further suggest the "glory" means to "take pride in himself, and aspire to be head of a faction." All the glory should go to God. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 4:7.)

We get into Christ's body by obeying God. If we listen to Jesus, great wisdom will be ours. (Matthew 12:42.) "Righteousness" is the right relation to God brought about by believing and obeying Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5:21.) Vine says "sanctification" is "separation to God." Vine says "redemption" is "the deliverance of the believer from the presence and power of sin, and of his body from bondage to corruption." So, as McGarvey and Pendleton point out, we should not glory in the preacher who brought the message, but in the One who planned our salvation. (1 Corinthians 1:30-31; Jeremiah 9:23-24.)

Baptism Or Repentance First?

T. PIERCE BROWN

John the Baptizer said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose

shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." (Matthew 3:10.) In the Greek text "unto repentance" is "eis metanoian." Every Greek scholar of whom we are aware knows that "eis" generally points forward-into or into. Occasionally one takes the position that this passage and Luke 11:32 where they "repented at the preaching of Jonah" show that it may mean "because of." It is sad that anyone would let his theological theory pervert his scholarly knowledge instead of letting his knowledge determine his theology, but we feel confident that it happens in some cases, such as these mentioned.

Let us first examine Luke 11:32. The phrase "repented at" is from the Greek "metenoeesan eis." Since it appears logical that they repented because of the preaching of Jonah, the few scholars who take the position that "eis" may mean "because" of assume that it means that in this place. Without going into a long, detailed explanation of the matter, let us simply say that it does not matter that Jonah's preaching caused them to repent, the meaning here is that they repented into the state or condition demanded by Jonah-a reformation of life. It may help us a little to realize that there are two words translated "repent." "Metanoeo" is a repentance that leads to a reformation of life. "Metamelomai" is a repentance that is merely a sorrow or regret for what has happened. Judas had that kind of sorrow (Matthew 27:3) and went and hanged himself (Matthew 27:5).

So, when John preached a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4), he preached that they needed to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. That repentance preceded baptism. Remember that John . had said in Matthew 3:8, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." He did not mean that they had to go and do certain good works before he would baptize them. He did mean that they had to have the kind of repentance that would cause them to reform their lives before their baptism would be worth anything to them. We should be able to see that they had to repent before their baptism was valid, but when he then said in verse 11, "I baptize you with water unto repentance" he means something very similar to what is meant in Jonah's case. "I baptize you in water that you may come into the state that true repentance will bring you. It is not good enough to have Abraham as your father. If you do not intend to do works that demonstrate you have a reformed life, your baptism will be worthless." This is evident when we read in Luke 3:12-14

when the publicans and soldiers asked what they were supposed to do, he told them the kind of things that would show they had a reformed life. Let us emphasize again that he was not telling them they must have a probationary period where they would have to demonstrate this changed life before he would baptize them. He was telling them that his baptism was for the purpose of leading them to that state where their repentance would be evidenced. This is why it was a "baptism unto repentance."

How To Become A Member Of The Lord's Church

GEORGE L. ROGERS

If you are wondering how to become a member of the Lord's church, read on. His church began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. (Acts 2.) You need not go beyond that time to learn how to become a member of the Lord's church.

After Christ's resurrection, he called his apostles to Him and gave them the Great Commission. Briefly it is, go, teach, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47.) A complete view of all three is easily seen. Jesus said go carry the gospel to every person. The gospel tells of Christ, His life, death and resurrection. All are to believe this, turn from sin in repentance and be baptized for the remission of sins. If they do this, God will save them from sin and make them members of the blood bought church of our Lord,

THE JEWS ON PENTECOST

According to Acts 2, Peter preached the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Most of his sermon was dedicated to proving the resurrection of Jesus. After he convinced his audience that Jesus was the long expected Messiah and that they had killed Him, Luke says, "Now when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?" The answer, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

(Acts 2:37,38.) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41.)

This is how the first members of the Lord's church were made. If you are thinking that you didn't become a member that way, please read on. Verse 47 says, "the Lord added them to the church." So, God adds men to the Lord's church. But don't be too sure the Lord added you to His church unless you did what they did on Pentecost. It is one thing to join a church, have your name on the church roll, and quite another thing to be added by the Lord to His church.

How can you be sure that God added you? This is only one example of conversion in Acts. The apostles had a remarkable unity of work. They were guided by the Holy Spirit. What they said and did as recorded in Acts 2 and in every other account in the Bible is right!

THE CORINTHIANS

In Acts 18:8, we see what the Corinthians did when they heard the "good news" preached. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Verse 12 of Acts 8 gives an account of Philip's labors in Samaria. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ they were baptized both men and women." If you will check the other accounts in the New Testament you will see that all did the same things to become members of the Lord's church.

If you have time to check the individual commands of God that stand between the sinner and the Kingdom or church, you will be able to see the alien sinner's duty in coming to Christ.

OBEY THE LORD NOW!

The first thing a sinner must do is to believe on Christ. (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:21-24.) After one has been made a believer, he must correct his life by turning away from sin and begin to live for Jesus. This resolution is repentance, but the resolve must end in a reformed life. (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30.) The confession of Christ is made before baptism and is to be repeated throughout life as demanded. (Matthew 10:32,33.) The confession is made with the mouth. (Romans 10:9,10.) The act that completes the obedience is water baptism. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts

22:16.) When the alien sinner has completed this obedience he is saved by the blood of Christ and the Lord adds him to His church. (Acts 2:47.) He won't be added to a denomination but he will be added to the church Jesus gave His blood to build. (Matthew 16:18, Acts 20:28.) Please look into these matters, and if we can help, please call or write us.

Ordain Preachers, Dedicate Babies?

JOHNNY RAMSEY

(Where in the Bible does it teach about ordaining preachers and having services for dedicating babies? Are these things to be practiced today?)

There is no Bible authority for either practice. Christ told his followers, "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world...Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved? (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). In this commission, Jesus appointed, or ordained, disciples to preach and teach His gospel until the end of time. That is all the authority we need to proclaim His truth with power (Titus 2:15). Human hands cannot intervene in that arrangement. No council or synod or hierarchy countermands heaven's decree.

Nowhere in the Scriptures do you find the practice of "dedicating babies" as a religious rite. Parents are told, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord". (Ephesians 6:4). No religious ceremony is necessary or commanded to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6). We are told, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17). How can we do something in the name of the Lord which He never authorized? Too many people desire display and ostentatious ceremony rather than personal responsibility.

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