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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Church Is The Spiritual Household Of God

WHEN THE SUBJECT of the church is discussed, one thinks of a physical building in which people gather together for worship, because a modern dictionary defines the word in that way. The word "church," however, is never used in the New Testament of the Bible to convey such a meaning.

In the Scriptures the word "church" denotes the body of people who have become the family of God. Upon their obedience to the form of the gospel of Christ (Romans 6:16-18)—the new birth of John 3—the Lord Himself added them to His spiritual body, which is His church.

The English word "church" is a translation of the Greek word "ek-klesia." In some languages, such as Hindi and Urdu, the word is left untranslated and simply reads "ka-lisia," which means "the body of citizens or the assembly of people." Christ, in Matthew 16:18, had promised, "... upon this rock I will build MY church." The rock to which He referred was the fact that He was and is the Son of the living God. The very foundation of the family of God—the church—is this bed-rock truth.

After Jesus' ascension into heaven and then the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, His disciples, according to His great commission, for the first time declared the gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead before a great multitude of people. Hearing the good news of the love of God and the death

of His Son for the sinners, those people were cut to the heart, and they wanted to know from the apostles, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* They were convinced that they had sinned, and now they wanted to receive forgiveness for their sins.

"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). Continuing, we read, *"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (2:41).*

Thus the body of the saved people was established and built, beginning with the twelve apostles and the three thousand souls who had believed in Christ with all their heart and had repented of their sins, being baptized in order to have their sins washed away.

Note, the last verse in this second chapter of the book of Acts tells us more about these three thousand baptized and forgiven people, that they were, *"... praising God and having favor with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."*

Now the church, Christ had promised to build, was established. Before Acts, chapter 2, the church was spoken of as being in the future, that is, it is going to be built but is not in existence yet. After chapter 2, whenever we read of the church in the pages of the Bible, it is always spoken of as present and in existence in the world. From that point in time, the Lord was daily **adding** to the church those who were being saved in the same manner as the three thousand souls were saved on the day of Pentecost.

The inference is that no person, can ever **join** the church—the church Christ Himself had established, His own church—by his or her own will or choice. The Lord **adds** the saved because He knows those who, after hearing His gospel, truly believe with all their heart that He is the Son of God, repent or change their mind to no longer walk in sin, who go down into the waters of baptism to have their old self buried and to come up out of the grave of baptism to walk in the new life in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3-6), and thus have been born anew (John 3:3-5).

The term "church" and "the kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of God" were interchanged by Christ in Matthew 16:18, 19 when He told Peter, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter (Greek: Petros—pebble*

or stone), *and on this rock* (Greek: Petra—ledge of rock) / *will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.* "

Notice, dear reader, that in the same statement the Lord promised to build **His church** and to give the **keys of the kingdom** of heaven. He said that not even Hades could prevent the establishment of the church—and then a few breaths later He promised the coming of the kingdom during the lifetime of the apostles (Matthew 16:28) "*Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power*" (Mark 9:1).

The church of Christ is the earthly form of the kingdom of heaven. This is evident from the promises made on this occasion to the apostles.

We also remember how Christ, in His conversation with a Jewish leader, had told him that unless one is born of **water and the Spirit** he cannot enter the **kingdom of God** (John 3:5). This is the **new birth, the baptism in water** described in Acts 2, after which the Lord **added** the obedient to the **church**.

The Holy Spirit who inspired the men of God in the writing of the Scriptures instructs us what we must do to be saved and thus become members of the Lord's church and citizens of God's kingdom (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16). The apostle Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "... by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body..." That is to say, by learning what the Spirit has taught of the Words of Life, we are all baptized into one body. The body, according to Ephesians 1:22, 23, is the church which the Lord established (Ephesians 4:4).

Thus, we conclude that a person enters the kingdom of heaven and the church of Christ at the same time and by the same process. The saved, as we read in Acts 2:47, were **added by the Lord to the church**, and in Colossians 1:13 the apostle wrote: "**He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.**" The church of the Lord exists and so does His kingdom exist. One who is in His church is also in His kingdom. Yes, the Lord adds the saved to His church, His kingdom—but *only when one obeys the commands of His gospel, picturing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.*

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

J.C. Choate

Lesson One

Meaning of the Church

NO ONE WILL DENY that the Bible talks about a church. But whose church? Which church? What church? These questions, and many others, will be answered in time, but right now we want to find out what the church is.

Let us begin by pointing out what it is not. The church as described in the Bible is not Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. It is not denominational, inter-denominational, or sectarian. It is not a political organization, just another social organization, and neither is it a material meeting house. So if it is none of these, what is it?

The majority of people do not understand the church because they do not know what it is. Consequently, they do not understand the purpose of it, the importance of it, or the work of it. But the Bible plainly tells us what it is. The word church comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means "the called out." So the church is a called out body of people, those who have been called out of the world into the kingdom of God's dear Son (1 Colossians 1:13). It is the spiritual body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), made up of those who have obeyed Christ (Hebrews 5:8,9), and are therefore saved by him and added to his church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). Another way of putting it, the church consists of the followers of Christ.

The word church appears in the Bible in two senses. First, it is spoken of in the universal sense. This is what Christ had in mind when he said, *"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"* (Matthew 16:18). There are many other verses where the word church is used in the same way, speaking of the church in a universal sense. That is, wherever the church may be found in the world, if it is the Bible church, it is that church which Jesus said he would build. Second, it is spoken of in the local sense. For instance, when Paul was writing to the church at Rome, and speaking of the various congregations, he said, *"The churches of Christ greet you"* (Romans 16:16). He wasn't speaking of a number

of churches, in the sense of denominations, but rather a number of local congregations of the Lord's church.

To further explain, you will note that the scriptures speak of the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Philippi, etc. (1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1). All of this is confusing to some people because they are accustomed to thinking of the church only in the terms of denominationalism. But you will not read of the first denomination in the word of God. In the foregoing cases, you have a number of congregations spoken of and each congregation is the Lord's church in its particular community, but all of them together compose the church universal. It is so simple when denominationalism is forgotten and one goes to the Bible and sees the church as the Lord gave it.

To further help us to understand the meaning of the church, let us realize that the Bible pictures the church as being:

1. The body of Christ. It is the spiritual body of Christ, with Christ as its head (Ephesians 5:23). There is but one body (Ephesians 4:4), and the one body is the one church (Colossians 1:18).
2. The household of **God**. The word house in the scriptures suggests a family, which helps us to understand that the church is the family of God. In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul says that the house of God is the church of the living God. God is the Father and we are his children (Galatians 3:26,27; Ephesians 1:3).
3. The **kingdom of God**. Kingdom suggests a king, and so Christ is the King (Revelation 17:14). But to be a king, the kingdom has to exist now, and it does (Acts 8:12). We are his subjects, the world its territory, and the New Testament its law. This is the church (Matthew 16:18,19).
4. **The vineyard of the Lord**. Christ is the vine and individual Christians are the branches (John 15:1-8). The idea here is to work in the vineyard and to bear fruit for the Lord.

The church is thus defined. Please study these matters in light of the scriptures and see for yourself. If you will see the church as God intended for you to see it, then your whole attitude will be changed, and perhaps even your life.

(To be continued)

You Are the Light of the WORLD

CHRISTOPHER FLICKINGER

CONSIDER FOUR STATEMENTS GOD made to Abram: (1) "I will make you a great nation"; (2) "I will bless you"; (3) "I will make your name great"; and (4) "you shall be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2 NKJV).

At first glance, nothing seems out of the ordinary in this chain of pronouncements from the Almighty. But the last statement is not consistent with the first three. Why did God say Abram was to be a blessing when clearly it was God who was the blessing? The answer to this question affects every Christian, and Jesus clearly made this point with His disciples in the New Testament.

Spotlight on Peter

The apostle Peter loved Jesus; he even boasted in his devotion (John 13:36-38). But when the time came to act on that commitment, Peter fell short and denied the Lord three times. Later, when the risen Christ confronted Peter, the apostle, once again, confessed his heartfelt devotion (21:15-17). Jesus then instructed Peter to feed and tend the Lord's sheep.

In essence, Jesus said to Peter, "If you love Me, then go, and do My work." Where Peter obviously loved Jesus in his heart, in his mind and from his lips, the Lord told him that was not enough.

The inspired Hebrews writer stated: "Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, *the fruit of our lips*, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16, emphasis added). Our love for the Lord must not come just from our hearts, minds and lips; we must also go, do and serve others.

Peter, as with all Christians, was so anxious to be a great follower of Jesus. But greatness in the eyes of the Lord comes from faith and action. Jesus said: "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ... The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:26-28). The Lord added, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

More blessed to give? Now go back to what God told Abram: "You shall be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2). How was Abram to be a blessing when clearly it was God who was the blessing? The answer is that God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others. Later

in life, Peter became an inspired writer who understood, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

Spotlight on You

How can you be a blessing to others? By going, doing, working and serving others as the Lord instructs. Use the gifts He has blessed you with to be a blessing to others (Romans 12:6-8).

How are you serving and blessing others? Please do not let the giving of money be all that you do. A recent TV commercial cleverly depicts a kingdom being invaded by a strong enemy force; as all the king's men urgently meet at the round table to come up with a plan, one man puts a sack of coins on the table and asks, "Can we throw money at the problem?" Giving money should not be the extent of our service.

Jesus said we are to be "the light of the world. ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father" (Matthew 5:14-16). How can you be this light of the world to glorify God? You cannot do miracles; you cannot raise the dead; you cannot feed all the hungry; you cannot take away everyone's pain. What exactly can you do? It's simple: Help those with heavy burdens by making those burdens more bearable.

God gave so much to Abram. In return, Abram was to be a blessing to others. God has given us so much. In return, we—the light of the world—are to be a blessing to others by serving others. As Jesus said, "To whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48). Let us, indeed, serve as the light of the world.

Why Churches Of Christ Do Not Use Musical Instruments In The Worship Of God?

TOM HOLLAND

THE EXPLANATION FOR why Churches of Christ do not use musical instruments in worship is understood in one simple idea: a recognition and respect for the Lord Jesus Christ as the head of His church. God put His Son in this exalted position above all other authority (Ephesians 1:18-22). The Lord Jesus, preeminent in the universe (Colossians 1:15-17), is also preeminent as the head of His church (v. 18).

Because Jesus is in heaven (Colossians 3:1-2), He functions as the head of His church through the New Covenant of which He is the Mediator (Hebrews 9:15; 8:7-13). The New Covenant reveals the way God saves people through His Son, who first spoke the "great salvation" (2:1-4). The way the saved are to worship God is revealed in the New Covenant (8:10-12; 10:19-25) along with the way the saved are to live (Hebrews 12, 13).

The head of the church directs worshipers to sing with the accompaniment of the human heart (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). The Lord Jesus, who identified with His people, sings with them in the assembly or church (Hebrews 2:11-12).

Because singing is a specific command and because that which is to accompany singing is identified—namely, the heart of the singer (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19)—then to add mechanical instruments to the singing is a rejection of the command of the head of the church.

The next statement after the command to sing admonishes: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17 NKJV). Because the head of the church commanded singing, we cannot add a mechanical instrument to the command and do that "in the name of the Lord" or by the One whose name is above all rule, power and authority (Ephesians 1:21).

Efforts at Justification

What is the fundamental reason people in religion attempt to justify the human practice of using mechanical instruments of music in worship? The real reason: they want to use them!

So the attempt: "God's people in the Old Testament used instruments in worship." Do we live under the Old Testament with priests, animal sacrifices, harps, timbrels and dancing (Exodus 15:20-21)? Or do we live under the New Covenant of the One who is head of the church?

Another attempt: "Mechanical instruments in worship are the same as having songbooks, lights and pews." The "logic" is not valid. A songbook is not an addition to singing; it is an expedient to singing. A mechanical instrument *is* an addition to singing.

The current "scholarly" attempts to justify an addition to the Lord's command to sing are nothing more than a revamping of old arguments that years ago were answered in debates, books and

magazine articles. The *psallo* argument (*psallo* is the Greek word used in Ephesians meaning “to pluck, twitch as a musician would pull or twitch the strings of an instrument”) can be resolved by determining the context of the word—namely, what is to be “plucked” or “twitched”?

The Head of the church identified the “instrument” to be plucked: the heart of the singer. If a mechanical instrument is inherent in *psallo*, the singing *must* be accompanied by the mechanical instrument.

Another “scholarly” effort to justify something the Head of the church has not authorized comes from the “psalms” that are to be sung (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). Old Testament psalms were to be sung with musical accompaniment, so the argument asserts.

Can we read Hebrews 2:11-14, about Jesus singing in the assembly, without accompanying that with a mechanical instrument? If the Lord’s command to sing psalms means to sing with accompaniment of a mechanical instrument, how could we obey His command and not use a mechanical instrument? The Head of the church has specified what He wants to accompany the psalms, hymns and spiritual songs—namely, the heart of the singer (Colossians 3:16).

One other argument will be considered: “The Bible does not say we cannot use mechanical instruments in worship.” This contention has been identified as the argument from silence. However, if the Head of the church has specified what to do—namely, sing with the accompaniment of the singer’s heart -then is the New Covenant silent about that which the Lord wants in worship?

Furthermore, if our religious practices are to be based on what is not said, where do we stop? Dancing, magical acts, and rock-and-roll type music are being included in “worship” today. Why not? The Lord does not say we cannot do these things. Or has He when He specified what *is* to be done?

The inspired writer of Hebrews, who quoted from Psalm 22 to assure the Lord’s people that the Lord would sing with them in the assembly (Hebrews 2:11-14), used the “silence argument” in a positive way. He proved by it that the Lord Jesus could not qualify to be a Levitical priest because the Lord, who had specified the priests were to come from the tribe of Levi, had said nothing about the tribe of Judah, except that He had already declared the

identification of the tribe from which the priests were to come, and the Lord Jesus did not come from that tribe (7:11-14).

Because the Lord specified that the singing in worship is to be accompanied by the human heart (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19), silence forbids the human practice of adding instruments rather than justifying it.

In the efforts to justify an old human tradition of using mechanical instruments in worship, some large churches, once known as churches of Christ, are forsaking the "traditions" that came from men guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Yet singing without mechanical instruments in worship is not a "Church of Christ" tradition.

The practice—called by some "a cappella" (a Latin phrase meaning "according to chapel")—is the "tradition" that came through those who wrote "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37), the One who is the head and the only head of the church (Colossians 1:18). That is the reason His church has not, does not and will not accept the practice of using mechanical instruments in worship of God.

ARE INFANTS "BY NATURE" CHILDREN OF WRATH?

WAYNE JACKSON

DURING A SPEECH some time back before the American Humanist Association, television mogul Ted Turner leveled a blast at Christianity for its alleged doctrine that infants are born in sin. The fact is, though this teaching is popular with certain denominational groups, it is unknown to the Bible. However, a few biblical passages are perverted in a futile attempt to support the doctrine. In Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul wrote: *"And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."*

Here, the apostle describes unregenerate people as being "by nature children of wrath". Calvinists appeal to this verse for support

of the doctrine of hereditary total depravity. They feel the passage is affirming that humans are "by birth children of wrath".

Baptist writer B.H. Carroll contended that Ephesians 2:3 "knocks the bottom out of the thought that sin consists in the willful transgression of a known commandment. He argued that the allusion is to "original sin." This is the theory that all people are born tainted with the guilt of Adam's sin.

The assertion is absolutely false. There are several interesting observations that can be made in connection with Ephesians 2:1 ff.

First, note that in verse one the apostle plainly declares that spiritual death is the consequence of "*your trespasses and sins*" (ASV). Note the word *your*. This emphasizes personal sin. We are not spiritually dead as a result of Adam's transgression. Though the term "your" is not found in the King James Version (following the Textus Receptus), it is amply supported by evidence from ancient Greek manuscripts, early versions, and the writings of the "church fathers" in the post-apostolic period (Salmond, p. 283).

Second, in verse three Paul affirms that all of us "*were ... children of wrath*". The verb *emetha* ("were") is an imperfect tense form. The imperfect tense describes continuity of action as viewed in the past. Thus, here it depicts the habitual style of life which had characterized these saints prior to their conversion. Had the apostle intended to convey the notion of inherited sinfulness at the time of their birth, he easily could have expressed that idea by saying, "you became by birth children of wrath".

Third, it is also significant that the verb is in the middle voice in the Greek Testament. The middle voice is employed to suggest the subject's personal involvement in the action of the verb. The language therefore stresses that the sinful condition of the Ephesians had been their individual responsibility. Hence, combining the imperfect tense and middle voice aspects of the verb, we might paraphrase the passage like this: "*you kept on making yourselves children of wrath*".

Fourth, it is probable that the King James Version and most subsequent translations reflect a Calvinistic bias in the rendition, "*by nature children of wrath*." The Greek word *phusei*, rendered "nature" in our common versions, can denote "a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature" (Thayer, p 660). Edward Robinson observed that the term can be understood of a "native mode of thinking, feeling, acting" on the part of those who are "unenlightened by the influence of divine truth" (p. 771).

Clearly, these people, by habitual practice, had become worthy of divine wrath.

Hugo McCord's translation has an excellent rendition of this passage. It suggests that the Ephesians had "by custom" become children of wrath. Winter contended that their trespasses and sins had made them "natural children of wrath" (p. 270). Moule suggested that the phrase rendered "*by nature children of wrath*" might be equivalent to saying, "*left to ourselves we are destined to suffer the consequences of sin*" (p. 174). Thus, the Ephesians, in their unregenerate state, had become, by long practice of sin, deserving of the wrath of God. These thoughts are consistent with the immediate context and with the tenor of the Bible as a whole.

Fifth, it is worthy of note that if this passage teaches that babies are born totally depraved, one would have to infer necessarily that infants who die in that condition are lost since they are clearly designated as "*children of wrath*" (cf. the expression "son of perdition"—John 17:12). Yet, this is a conclusion that even denominationalists are loath to accept.

The Bible does not teach the doctrine of inherited depravity. The dogma is strictly of human origin. It is a serious tragedy that those who profess to be friends of the Scriptures will teach this error, thereby subjecting the Christian system to unjustified criticism. Ephesians 2:3 does not teach inherited depravity.

Pillars of Apostolic Power

PERRY N. HALL

"BUT YE SHALL receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). These words were spoken to the apostles by the Lord shortly before He ascended back to heaven. This promise was very vital to the establishment and perpetuation of Christianity. When Jesus called them, they were ordinary, uninspired men. They had accompanied the Lord during His ministry, beginning from the baptism of John until the day He ascended. They were chosen by the Lord to be apostles that they might be sent out as eyewitnesses of His resurrection, as they took the Gospel to the whole world (Acts 1:21,22; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Since there

cannot be a successor to an eyewitness by one who was not a witness, there can be no modern day apostles. It is unbelievable that some today claim to be such and some accept them as such. Men certainly do not and cannot qualify as apostles. Others presently claim the baptism of the Holy Spirit which enabled the apostles to work miracles and be inspired. All such modern day claims make men liars and frauds, as the public is defrauded of millions and millions of dollars.

Jesus had prepared His personal apostles for the baptism of the Spirit when He told them that He was going away and that the Comforter (Paraclete), the Holy Spirit, would be given them (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7), that the Spirit would be their miraculous Helper. They were not to be deserted, so as to make them spiritual orphans (14:18). The signs of an apostle would be mighty works and wonders through the power of the Spirit of God (Romans 15:19; 2 Corinthians 12:11,12). They were enabled to teach and preach an inspired message because they were, by the divine power of the Spirit, taught all things that pertain to life and godliness (John 14:26; 2 Peter 1:3,16,19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Spirit did guide them into all truth (John 16:13). There is, therefore, no place for so-called latter-day revelations. All who profess such are simply deluded and, sadly, to be damned (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). We must hear only the voice of the Good Shepherd as He speaks to us through the words He gave His inspired men (John 10:1-9,24-29; 17:5-23). These words are not the words of man, but of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The apostles were miraculously reminded by the Spirit of all Jesus had taught them and had revealed to them things to come (John 16:13). This message was confirmed through the inspired signs, wonders, and miracles they were enabled to do (Mark 16:19,20; Hebrews 2:1-4). Through the Spirit and confirmed Word, the world was and is convicted concerning sin, righteousness, and the approaching judgment of all men (John 16:8-11).

When the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles in baptismal measure at Pentecost, they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4). They preached the crucified, resurrected Christ as having fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (verses 22-36). Three thousand considered the miracles and message of the triumphant Savior. They were convicted of their sins by the Spirit's inspired words of apostolic power and preaching (verse 37), and were told how they could receive forgiveness (verse 38). Having gladly received the

message, they were baptized in water for the remission of their sins and were added to the church of Christ, thus embracing the Savior and His salvation (verses 41,47; Mark 16:15,16). They then continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

When we receive the words of the inspired apostles, we receive Christ, and when we receive Christ, we receive the Father and everlasting life (Matthew 10:14,40).

Dear friend, receive with meekness the Word that is able to save your soul (James 1:21). The Gospel of Christ, preached by the apostles of Christ, is God's power to save (Romans 1:15-17).

Jesus' Baptism Compared to Ours

OWEN OLBRICHT

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS is important in the annals of Christian information. Jesus was God in the flesh (Matt. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:16) and without sin (2 Cor 5:21), yet he submitted to water baptism. In this way he dignified this humble act by willingly submitting to it.

Similar to Ours

Jesus' baptism was similar to our in various ways:

1. He did no work in being baptized. He submitted to the hands of John, the immerser, who baptized Him (Mark 1:9). Another person baptizes us (Acts 8:38).
2. His baptism included water (Matt. 3:16). Our baptism includes water (Acts 8:38,39; 10:47; 1 Pet. 3:20b, 21).
3. Water was not brought to Him. He went to the water (Matt. 3:13). The example of a person being baptized in the Christian age is that of one coming to water and being baptized (Acts 8:36).
4. He went to a place where there was much water (John 3:23). He went to the Jordan (Matt. 3:13). The same person mentioned above came to water when he asked to be baptized (Acts 8:36).
5. After baptism He came out of the water (Matt. 3:16). The Ethiopian also came out of the water after baptism (Acts 8:39).
6. He received the Holy Spirit after baptism (Matt. 3:16). We

are promised the Holy Spirit when we are baptized (Acts 2:38).

He Was Baptized by John

Even though Jesus was baptized by John, much of that which was required of those John baptized did not apply to Jesus. Only a few things involved in the baptism John administered applied to Jesus. It required:

1. Much water (John 3:23).
2. Allowing another to immerse Him (Matt. 3:16).
3. Testimony (Acts 19:4).
4. Obedience to God (Matt. 3:15)

A number of things done by those being baptized by John were not involved in Jesus' baptism. Those who were baptized by John:

1. Were required to repent (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).
2. Confessed their sins (Matt. 3:6).
3. Were told to believe in the one to come (Acts 19:6).
4. Were baptized to be forgiven of their sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).

Jesus' Baptism and Ours

Jesus' baptism differed from ours in various ways. Notice the following differences:

1. Our baptism is to be in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Jesus was baptized in no name.
2. We are baptized as sinners needing to be forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Col. 2:12,13). Jesus was sinless (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15b).
3. We are baptized because we are unrighteous sinners (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Jesus was baptized to continue to be righteous, to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15).
4. Our baptism requires repentance (Acts 2:38). Jesus had no sins of which to repent.
5. We are baptized into Jesus' kingdom (John 3:5), His one body (1 Cor. 12:13), the church (Eph. 1:22; 23). Jesus did not need to enter the kingdom, for it is His (Col. 1:13).
6. Our baptism is based on our believing in Jesus as the Son of God (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12). Jesus knew who He was so did not need to believe in Himself when He was baptized (John 8:28). He was baptized to show that He is the Son of God (John 1:33, 34).
7. We receive the Holy Spirit at baptism because we are

children of God (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26,27; 4:6). When the Holy Spirit came on Jesus, the Father testified Jesus is His special Son (Matt. 3:17).

8. We are baptized because of our faith in the working of God, in the One whose power raised Jesus (Col. 2:12). Jesus' baptism was before He was raised.
9. We are baptized in order die to sin and to enter into a new spiritual life (Rom. 6:3,4). Jesus did not need to enter into a new spiritual life. He had a glory with the Father before He came to earth (John 17:5).
10. We realize we are being baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3). Jesus did not need to be baptized into His own death.
11. We are lost before baptism so must be baptized so that we can be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Jesus never was lost so did not need salvation.
12. Our baptism puts us into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) where we receive all spiritual blessings. Jesus did not need to enter into Himself to receive these blessings for all spiritual blessings are in Him (Eph. 1:7).

Conclusion

Jesus' baptism was important. He traveled a long distance to be baptized, from Galilee to Judea (Matt. 3:13). Through it He continued to maintain the righteousness He already had (Matt. 3:15). If He had neglected it, He would not have remained righteous. At His baptism the Holy Spirit descended and remained on Him as a testimony that He is the Son of God (John 1:33, 34). In this way He dignified baptism for all who would be His followers. All who reject water baptism reject the very act that Jesus honored by being baptized.

Those who would be His disciples will be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19) so that they can be saved (Mark 16:16). Jesus has shown the way. Those who would be His followers will obey Him so that they can be saved (Heb. 5:9).

PREACH THE WORD

FRED E. DENNIS

ONE OF THE MOST serious charges ever given to a mortal man

is found in 2 Timothy 4:2. This charge was given by one of the greatest preachers of all time, the apostle Paul. It was given by inspiration. It was given to a young gospel preacher by the name of Timothy, and to all subsequent gospel preachers. It is a solemn charge. It was given before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us hear the charge. Here it is: "Preach the word." The curse of high heaven rests upon the preacher who will not do this.

What does it mean to preach the word? In Acts 8:4 we are told about the church in Jerusalem being scattered abroad. It is said that they went everywhere "preaching the word." In the next verse it says that one of these preachers was a man by the name of Philip. It says that he went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. They preached the word and they preached Christ. When we preach Christ, we are preaching the word. In Acts 8:35 we are told that Philip opened his mouth and preached Christ.

In this article we want to give some substantial reasons for preaching the word. There is never a birth without first a begetting. This is just as true in the spiritual realm as it is in the physical. How is this begetting done in the spiritual realm? In telling about how the brethren in Corinth were begotten, the inspired Paul says: "I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). We see how it was done in that case. Again, in James 1:18 we are told: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." And then once again, in 1 Pet. 1:23 we have this: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Now we can see there would be no spiritual begetting unless the word of God is preached. This is what brings it about. We are not surprised that Paul would say, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). He had to preach it. In the next verse he says: "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."

Another reason for preaching the word is because this is the way faith is produced. Faith is a fundamental. It is impossible to please God without it (Heb. 11:6). Many sincere souls have no intelligent comprehension of how faith is brought about. They need to be taught that faith comes by hearing the word of God. This is plainly stated in Rom. 10:17. In the absence of the word of God there can be no faith. How important to know that every act we do and every step we take in matters religious are founded upon a

"thus saith the Lord"! If we do something that God has not said one word about, we do it without faith. In Acts 15 we read about an important meeting of some inspired elders and apostles. They had come together to consider certain matters. Speeches were made. One of them was made by the apostle Peter. He told his listeners how that God had made choice among the apostles that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. You see, their faith was to be founded upon hearing the word of the gospel. Acceptable faith comes in no other way. It does not come by hearing the doctrines and commandments of men. There is nothing mysterious about it. The mystery is all cleared up by the simple statements of God's word making it plain how faith is brought about. My friends, may I plead with you to take no step in religion until you are assured by the word of God that he commands you to take it.

We cannot see God with impure hearts. Jesus says that the pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8). This purity of heart is brought about by the word of God. Referring once again to Peter's speech in Jerusalem, we hear him saying in Acts 15 :9 that the Lord had purified the hearts of the Gentiles by faith. And this same inspired apostle wrote in 1 Pet. 1:22 that our souls are purified in obeying the truth. Purity of soul is brought about by obedience to the gospel of Christ. Our souls will never be made free from sin until we obey the word of God.

Christians are a sanctified people. Many have strange ideas about sanctification. These strange ideas do not originate in the Bible. They are the figments of the imaginations of men. In John 17:17 Jesus prays that we might be sanctified through the truth, and then hastens to say that the word of God is truth. In John 15:3 Jesus says that we are made clean through the word. Being made free from sin by virtue of our obedience to the word of God is what the Bible means by sanctification. This is sanctification.

We hear much talk about converting power. I wonder what this power is. Let us read Ps. 19:7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The word of God is God's converting power. It brings about our salvation. The great apostle Paul wrote: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16). If we want folks converted to Christ, we must teach them the gospel of Christ. Of course, if we want them converted

to something else, it will be necessary to preach something else besides the word of God. To convert people to some peculiar theory or some human religious organization it becomes necessary to preach something besides the word of God. Then we shall have to leave the word of God and begin to preach human doctrines. But if our aim is to save souls by converting them to the Lord, all we need is the word of God. How full of it we should be, and how humbly we should preach it to dying men and women. The word of God is our guide and light. It is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105). In the verse before this we are told we get understanding through the word; and when we have this understanding, it causes us to hate every false way. When you see "religious people" who can throw their arms around anything, you may rest assured that they do not know the word of God. It is ignorance of the word that causes people to endorse most anything that men teach. The word of God causes us to hate every false way. It does not cause us to hate people, but it causes us to hate falsehood. How could it be otherwise? The intelligent student of the Bible knows what falsehood will do for the souls of men. Well does he know it will bring those poor souls down to hell. Is it any wonder he would hate the false way and love those who are being deluded by false teachers? Sometimes their love and zeal are misunderstood by the very one whom they seek to help. This is one of Satan's devices to bring about their eternal condemnation in hell. My friends, the only thing in this wide, wide world that will save our souls is obedience to the gospel of Christ. May we preach it in season and out of season.

We must preach the word to our friends and loved ones while they live, and then after they are gone we can continue to preach the word to the ones who are left behind. If the loved ones died in the Lord, we can point the remaining loved ones to the great and exceeding promises found in the word. We can comfort the bereaved with the word of God. Of course, there is no comfort concerning them who die out of the Lord.

We want to make a fit closing to this by reading carefully 1 Thess. 4:13-18: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not

prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Baptized, Came Forth, Then What?

DILLARD THURMAN

JUST BEFORE JESUS left His disciples; *"Jesus came spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* (Mt. 28:18-20). He revealed to them that all who were baptised by them were to be taught to observe all things He had taught of the kingdom, and spiritual behaviour, during the three and a half years He had instructed them! The job was not finished at baptism: it was just begun! Even to this day, all who are baptized into Him are to spread the message of salvation to all nations, and to every creature; and then we must teach these new disciples to *"walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called."* Baptism is only the starting point, and from there every Christian grace must be added!

We Must Live Holy and Godly Lives!

Jesus made a very precious promise: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* (Mk. 16:16). That is something one can hold on to, once he is baptized! But we must readily admit that being saved also imposes certain obligations; for that blessing entails a pledge of holy conduct and godly behaviour! As Paul wrote, *"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."* (Eph. 5:1-2). Our lives are changed by being God's children, saved from sin! That's the marvelous working of His love! *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness*

and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Tit. 2:11-12). If by God's grace, through baptism, you obtain salvation, then *"what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness"*? It's what follows baptism that proves its worth to a skeptical world!

Here's what Christ wanted the church to be, and what He did to assure it: *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."* (Eph. 5:25-27). After we've been washed and presented without spot or blemish, surely we must keep His church pure and spotless by our own personal holiness and sanctification! Paul showed the vile, loathsome sins that characterized some in Corinth; but then said, *"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* (1 Cor. 6:11). Thus a life of holiness can follow a life of sin. Baptism is the Great Divide!

We Must Be Clothed In Christ Jesus!

Paul wrote the saints of Galatia: *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (Gal. 3:26-27). Paul plainly and emphatically states that one enters into Christ by baptism, and that he also puts on Christ by that same act! Do you wonder how this is accomplished? He explains it: *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."* (2 Cor. 3:18). We grow more and more like Him, and imbibe His image, by looking into the Word of God, and seeing His glory reflected there; and in emulating His deeds of service; while ever *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* (Heb. 12:2). Putting on Christ in baptism will have its effect when seen by associates as they behold our daily life. They will notice the difference, as Paul states: *"Ye are our epistle...known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ."* (2 Cor. 3:2-3). The whole world is reading Christ as written by our lives—all because we are clothed in Him!

We Must Continue Stedfast in the Faith!

Peter commanded on Pentecost: *"Repent, and be baptized*

every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38). As a result of that first sermon, 3,000 were added unto them; and as quickly responsibilities were enjoined: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42). There was a drastic change in their lives, also! They sold possessions for common distribution with the needy, they were in one accord in their worship, and sharing meals, and were continually praising God in their newfound life! Later Paul extolled this unity: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:13). He also urged, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58). After we have been baptized into Christ, we must firmly resolve that we will be stedfast.

We Must Be Loyal Subjects of Our King!

Jesus taught, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (Jno. 3:5-6). Some have foolishly argued that Jesus referred to birth of water as the natural birth; and born of the Spirit as the spiritual birth! But not so! Notice He said “Except a MAN be born...”! The spiritual birth combined water and Spirit, and brings one into the kingdom of God! But this new relationship imposes new responsibilities! A new birth must demand a New Life to follow! “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4). This newness of life demands that the old life be put away forever! We owe it all to God, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Col. 1:13). Becoming new citizens in His heavenly kingdom, we must religiously obey those laws and statutes governing His subjects! So, because we have been baptized, we renounce worldly things that would tempt us!

We Must Behave as New Creatures in Him!

As new creatures, our behaviour must be altered! “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were

baptized into his death? . . . For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. 6:3, 5, 6). Paul explains this transition: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* (2 Cor. 5:17). After baptism into Christ, you live in a new family, and can't visit the old haunts of sin as before! *"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."* (1 Tim. 3:14-15). So the new child of God must learn how to behave himself in the house of God, the church! There are works in that house which the Lord plans for him to do! *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Eph. 2:10). We must learn to behave ourselves according to a new code of conduct!

We Must Now Live a Transformed Life!

Because we have been baptized into Christ for all blessings, we must show a transformation of life! From Rom. 6:6, it was shown that the old man died, and a new man was born anew, *"that the body of sin might be destroyed. . . For he that is dead is freed from sin."* (Vs 6-7). Paul shows this in his own life: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Gal. 2:20). Paul could confidently say, *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Phil. 1:20-21). His whole life had been transformed!

Paul exhorted all saints to be transformed because of Christ! *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."* (Col. 3:1-4). We can only close by imploring with Paul: *"And be not conformed*

to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2). Because we have been baptized INTO Christ, our whole life must be changed and transformed into the life which He would live!

It Was In His Heart

BILL MCFARLAND

THE MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE had been completed and Solomon was leading the people in dedicating it. As he prayed, he thought of the way the whole project had begun. He said, *"Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel"* (2 Chronicles 6:7).

Great things accomplished for the Lord always start with a purpose in someone's heart. A servant of God sees something that could be done to his Lord's glory and sets his heart on doing it.

In David's case the dream grew out of his respect for God's holiness and his appreciation for the way he had been blessed. He did not believe it was right for him to tend to his own needs without glorifying God (2 Samuel 7:1, 2).

And the purpose of his heart was not small. Not just any house would be acceptable for his great God. He said, *"The house that is to be built for Jehovah must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries"* (1 Chronicles 22:5).

Unfortunately, though, it became clear that David was not going to accomplish what was in his heart. God would not allow it, for David was a man of war (1 Chronicles 28:3). But when a man has God's glory in his heart, he does not care who gets the credit. So David set out with all that he owned to make preparation so that Solomon could accomplish the task (1 Chronicles 29:2). No sacrifice was too much for him.

God said that David did well to have such a thing in his heart (2 Chronicles 6:8). He became an encouragement to the people in seeking after the Lord and in serving Him.

What do you and I have in our hearts to do for our Lord? What are our purposes and dreams? The answer to this will tell the story of what we accomplish in a lifetime of devotion to our God.

