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Should One Be Baptized To Be Saved?

Baptism is one of the very important subjects of the Bible. Yet it is the most misunderstood subject of the Bible. Churches of Christ, (Romans 16:16), all over the world, are distinguishably known as the people who take the stand that baptism is as essential to salvation as are faith in Christ and repentance from sin. This is so because the Apostles of Christ in the beginning made baptism binding for salvation. (Matthew 18:18). Peter, the Apostle, in the beginning, told the multitude of people, who wanted to know, "What shall we do?" to "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . . ." (Acts 2:38). It didn't say that they were to be baptized because their sins were already forgiven, but that they were to be baptized for or in order to have the remission of sins. Likewise, Christ has said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. . ." (Mark 16:16). The doctrine that babies should be baptised, and later confirmed into Christ, is foreign to the teachings of the Bible.

The Greek word "Baptizo" has been transliterated or

anglicized and transported into the English language as "baptize". The only difference between the Greek word "baptizo" and English word "baptize" is the last letter. While in Greek it ends in "o" in English it ends in "e". In fact, "baptizo" of Greek has never been translated. However, had it been translated then it would read, "Repent, and be immersed. . . for the remission of sins." And, "He who believes and is immersed will be saved." The word baptism means immersion or burial. Colossians 2:12 reads, "buried with him in baptism. . . ."

Christ was also baptized (immersed) by John the immerser, who according to Luke 3:3 and Mark 1:4 was baptizing people "for the remission of sins." John, in fact, did not want to baptize Christ because he knew that Christ was the Son of God and had no sin in him. When Christ, therefore, asked John that he should baptize him, John said to him, "I have need to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me?" (Matthew 3:14). Yet Jesus said to John, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15) So Christ was not baptized for the remission of sins, because he had no sins to be forgiven. Why was he baptized then? "to fulfill all righteousness," as He said. According to Psalm 119:172 all God's commandments are righteousness. Jesus was baptized to obey God's commandment. He did it as an act of obedience. (Hebrews 5:8). But after His death of the cross for the sinful world and His subsequent resurrection from the grave, Christ commanded His disciples to: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19). Notice, He made the command of baptism essential for salvation, because He said, "He who believes and is baptised will be saved." (Mark 16:16).

Baptism, therefore, is a command of the Saviour and all who want to be saved from sins and go to heaven must be baptized. God put baptism in His plan of salvation to test our faith and to see if we really believe in His Son and trust Him to the extent that whatever he says we will do that. In the fifth chapter of the book of 2 Kings in the Bible, we read about a man whose name was Naaman. He was a rich man but he was a leper. In the story

we read that he was cleansed of his leprosy by the power of God and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child. God, through His prophet, had told Naaman to "go and wash in the river Jordan seven times and your flesh shall be restored to you and you shall be clean." Naaman first thought it would be foolish if he believed that. But in the story we read that Naaman repented of his mistake and "he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." God, not water, healed Naaman, but not until Naaman had obeyed God's command. Another similar story is found in the ninth chapter of the Book of John in the New Testament of the Bible. There we read of a man who was blind since birth. Christ, however, saw him and gave him sight. Let us see how that happened. The record reads: Christ "spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam". So he went and washed, and came back seeing." (John 9:6,7). Jesus could have healed him without asking him to do anything. But he didn't. He tested his faith in Him by a simple command. In both cases listed above their faith was tested, and they were to do something that was foolish from human standpoint. They could have laughed and made fun of God's command, and had they done so they would have remained a leper and a blind until their death. The same is true about those who refuse to be baptized for the remission of sins as Christ has commanded. Because God has no other plan of salvation. (Galatians 1:7-9).

Christ is the Saviour. (Luke 2:11). He saves those who believe in Him and obey Him. (John 3:16; Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8,9) Our sins are washed away in the blood of Christ and not in the water of baptism. (Revelation 1:5). But one must be baptized to have his sins washed away, as Saul, later known as Paul, the Apostle, was told to do in Acts 22:16. To have his sins washed away by the blood of Christ he had to reach the death of Christ where His blood was shed, and to come in contact with His death he was baptized into the death of Christ as Paul wrote and said in his book to the Romans. Here is what he said, "Or

do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection." (Romans 6:3-5). By being baptized then one gets united together in the likeness of Christ's death and thus the blood of Christ washes away his sins.

There may be those who say that baptism is not necessary for salvation. But if we are going to listen to God what He has said in His Bible then we know that one must believe with whole heart in Christ Jesus, and one must repent of all sins, and then must be baptized, immersed in water, for the remission of sins (Acts 8:35-39). Baptism is not all that one has to do to be saved. Baptism is the beginning point, however, of the Christian life. Christ requires that after becoming a Christian one must be faithful to Him by keeping all His commandments, and He has promised to give the crown of life, or the eternal life in heaven to those who will be faithful to Him until death. (2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 9: 24,25).

Jesus Saves

J.C. Choate

The scriptures clearly teach that Jesus came into this world to save man from his sin. Speaking of Mary giving birth to Jesus, the angel said, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21). Christ Himself said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19: 10). Again, He said, "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16,17). Paul wrote, "This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15).

Yes, Jesus Christ came to save the lost, to save man from his sin. Man, being in sin, separated from God, with no hope in this world or in the world to come, could not save himself. Neither could he look to some human like himself to save him. Only Christ could do that, and He could do so because He came down from God for that purpose, being willing to shed his blood as a sacrifice for man's sins, to die that salvation might be made possible. But even after the sacrifice has been made, man must accept it, believing that Christ is the Son of God, and that He died to save man. As proof of his belief in Christ, he must repent of his sins, confess Him before others as being the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of sins. That is, as one complies with the Lord's will he comes into contact with the blood of Christ and receives the benefits of it or is saved by it.

Sometimes we talk about a saving faith, as though it is a power in itself. The scriptures, however, describe saving faith as the faith one has in Christ that is strong enough to lead him to comply with the Lord's teaching, to obey the commands of Christ. That is saving faith. This faith is not merely a mental acceptance of Christ, but is an active, obedient faith. Where one believes only in his heart that Christ is the Son of God, but is unwilling to obey His teachings the scriptures describe this kind of faith as being dead. Read James 2. Keep in mind that it is Jesus who saves. Faith is said to save only in the sense that it leads one to accept Christ and to obey his teaching, which makes it possible for the Lord to save one from his sins.

Peter said on one occasion that baptism saves. (1 Peter 3:21). Christ commanded the Apostles to go into all world and preach the gospel to every creature. Then he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." (Mark 16:16). But how can one be saved by baptism? Baptism in water, or the new birth as it is described in

John 3:3-5, cannot by and within itself alone save anyone. When you read the context of these scriptures, however, you will see that being immersed in water or being baptized is the culmination of believing in the Lord and complying with the conditions that bring salvation or make it possible to save one from his sin. Nowhere in the scriptures are we taught that one can be saved by baptism only.

Again, Peter told those people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost that they should save themselves. (Acts 2:40). Christ taught the people of his day to repent or perish. (Luke 13:3). He also said that the truth makes one free. (John 8:32). We would conclude, too, from reading the scriptures that one must live the Christian life to be saved. But what does all of this mean? Are there many ways to be saved? Do "things" save us? Or is Jesus the saviour? If He is, why are these other things mentioned in relation to our salvation? It is all very simple. All of these expressions go back to the fact that when we believe enough in Jesus to do what He teaches, He saves us. For example, when Peter told those people on the day of Pentecost that they should save themselves, he was not saying that they had the power within themselves to save themselves apart from Christ. Rather, he was encouraging them to arise, to act, to obey the Lord, on the basis of their knowledge of Him and of their need of the salvation he was offering. Again, when Christ said that one must repent or perish, He was encouraging those around Him to repent of their sins, based on their faith in Him, and their obedience to Him, that they might not be lost. Also, the truth saves only as one is led by that truth to believe in the Lord and comply with his will. Finally, we can say that the Christian life saves, which would be as a result of following Christ, living a Godly life on the basis of Christ's teaching.

We also talk about salvation being in Christ and his church. Especially when it is said that one must be in the church to be saved, many conclude that we are teaching that the church is the saviour. Let it be clearly understood that the church cannot save, that Christ only is the saviour, but when one obeys Christ, and He saves that person, then Christ adds him to the church. If

one is saved, therefore, he is in the Lord's church because Christ has added those that He saves to his church. We therefore stress the fact that if one is not in the Lord's church, he is lost. Every person who is saved has been added by the Lord to His church at the moment of his salvation.

Christ, then, is the saviour, the one and only saviour. We cannot save ourselves apart from Him. We cannot be saved by following some man. Neither can we be saved by our own good works. Many things are involved in our salvation. There is faith, obedience, repentance, prayer, Christian living, and being in the Lord's church, but all of these things enter the picture only because of Christ, our faith in Him, our obedience to Him, and our faithfulness to Him. With Christ we have everything but without Him we have nothing.

God's Plan of Salvation

Mark Hooper

Since all men are sinners and stand condemned before the Righteous Judge, salvation is a subject that concerns everyone. Man is helpless to save himself because God's justice demands punishment for every sin. Sin is any violation of God's Word, no matter how insignificant it may seem. Man needs a Savior, one who can pay the price for his sins.

Jesus: Our Savior

Jesus, who was with God and equal to God (John 1:1-4), became a man and was tempted to sin just like we are, yet he never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Therefore, being perfect, He was qualified to bear the punishment for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21). This punishment is spiritual death or separation from God (Romans 6:23). Jesus not only endured the physical pain of the cross, but also endured spiritual separation from God as He took our sins upon Himself. That is why He cried out on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

Saved by Grace

As Jesus died for our sins on the cross, taking our punishment upon Himself, He made salvation available to all men. This is God's gift, or as the Bible calls it, God's grace. This salvation by grace is free to all who have faith in Christ, and cannot be earned by any works of man (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is this grace, the gospel (good news) that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead, that brings us salvation (Romans 1:16).

Saved by Faith

Complete faith in Christ will bring salvation from sin. What is faith as described in God's Word? Biblical faith has three ingredients: 1) Faith is belief in Christ as God's Son (John 3:16); but belief only is not faith, because even the demons believe in God, and tremble (James 2:19). Faith is more than just belief. 2) Faith is trust in Christ; being confident he will keep his promises (Hebrews 11:1), and giving our lives completely to his care (Galatians 2:20). 3) Faith is obedience to all biblical commands (Romans 1:5); if a person really loves Jesus he will obey him (John 14:15). No one can have faith in Jesus without obeying him. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17), and salvation comes only when belief is accompanied by doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21). Salvation is a gift from God, but it must be accepted by man through obedience to Christ. What are the specific steps to acceptance of God's saving grace? Let us examine them further.

Saved by Repentance

After believing that Christ is the Saviour of all men and is able to bring forgiveness of our sins through His blood (Romans 5:9), a person must repent or change from a life of sin to obedience to God. Jesus commanded repentance (Luke 13:3); Peter commanded it (Acts 2:38); and Paul commanded it directly from God (Acts 17:30). Salvation from sin is not possible unless a believer in Christ changes his sinful way of life and does his best not to sin deliberately (Romans 6:1-2). Repentance is more than being sorry for sin (2 Corinthians 7:10), and involves eliminating sin from our lives (Hebrews 12:1). But we are not

saved by repentance only. Saul of Tarsus repented on the road to Damascus, but his sins were not forgiven until three days later when he was baptized into Christ (Acts 22: 6-16). Repentance is another step to salvation.

Saved by Confessing Christ

Jesus explained that if we confess Him (as Lord) before men, He will confess us before the Father (Matthew 10:32). Paul said that if a man confesses with his mouth that "Jesus is Lord" and believes in the resurrection of Jesus in his heart, he will be saved (Romans 10:9). Public confession of Christ as Lord leads to salvation, but by itself is not enough. The Ethiopian confessed Jesus as Lord, but he did not rejoice in his salvation until after he was immersed into Christ (Acts 8:36-39).

Saved by Baptism

Jesus taught Nicodemus that in order to enter God's kingdom, one must be born of the water and Spirit (John 3:5). Jesus later commanded the apostles to preach the gospel to all creation. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved (Mark 16:15-16). Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Later, Peter wrote that it is baptism that saves us (1 Peter 3:21). Paul explains that baptism unites us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4). Only baptism by immersion symbolizes this death, burial, and resurrection. It is in this way we spiritually contact the blood of Christ which He shed at His death. The blood of Christ cleanses our sins (Revelation 1: 5-7), and we only receive it when we are baptized (immersed) into Christ (Galatians 3:27).

Saved by Faithful Living

Baptism is only the beginning of the Christian life. It is not an automatic ticket into heaven. Man can turn away from God and fall from grace (Galatians 5:4). If he continues to deliberately live a life of sin, no sacrifice for his sin is left and he will be punished in hell (Hebrews 10:26-29). Jesus told John to write to Christians that if we are faithful until we die, we will receive a crown of eternal life (Revelation 2:10).

Summary

Any one of the passages listed above that mentions salvation cannot be taken alone. Belief alone does not save us. Repentance alone does not save us. Baptism alone does not save us. A sincere heart alone does not save us. We must accept God's gift of salvation in the way He has commanded. We must, therefore, obey all scriptures on the subject of salvation. Omitting any one or more will nullify our quest of salvation from sin. The writer of the Psalms wrote: "The sum of thy word is truth" (Psalm 119: 160). Let us then follow only God's way of salvation and not any man-made false teaching.

If You Are Lost

John Stacy

If you die lost, you will have perverted the reason for your existence. You were made to fear God and keep his commandments. (Eccl 12:13), If you die lost, who will be able to comfort your loved ones who are left behind? Can the preacher do it and be honest with God, himself, and the family? Can he preach you into heaven, while he knows you are on the road to hell? There will be no liars in heaven. (Rev 21:8,27) Who will bury your influence if you are lost? They may bury your body beneath six feet of earth, but what of your example and influence? They will live on! Heb 11:4 says of Abel, he being dead yet speaketh! If you die lost, then Jesus went to the cross for nothing! Christ then should have stayed in heaven as far as you are concerned. Christ died to save your lost soul, but even Christ cannot save if you will not obey the author of your eternal salvation. (Heb 5:8, 9) What must you do to be saved: Read Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16.

Slogans

Flavil H. Nichols

I like concise statements which are easily remembered: A

"catchy" clause may be teeming with ideas. Yet, some such phrases may express only partial truth.

For example: "The fruit of a Christian is another Christian." Certainly there is a sense in which this is true. Like the Romans, we are "married" to Christ, and are expected to reproduce, or to "bring forth *fruit* unto God" (Rom. 7:4). However, there is other "fruit" beside new converts to be borne by Christians, for "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23). Each Christian should bear an abundance of such fruit.

To say that we are "Not grape-juice consumers, but productive branches" may imply that one should not drink the fruit of the vine even in the communion! This is not true, of course; for of the fruit of the vine, Jesus expressly said: "Drink ye all of it" (Matt. 26:27). But remember: Jesus also said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away" (Jn. 15:2).

Another such "Slogan" is that "We are not SEAFOOD lovers, but Fishers of Men." While it is true that Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19), it is also true that later—even after his resurrection—Jesus himself invited the apostles to a "Fish Dinner" which he had prepared! (Jn. 21:4-13).

To say that we are to be "Sowers of the Seed, not grain silos" is another witty statement. Of course, we must plant the truth in human hearts, for Jesus said, "The seed is the word of God" (Lk. 8:11), and "The sower soweth the word" (Mk. 4:14). However we ought to be able to say with David: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11). In the American Standard Version this text reads: "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." So there is a sense in which we should store up the knowledge of God's word in our hearts and minds. But just as a grain silo does not permanently keep its grain, so we likewise should dispense out the truth, teaching it to every person as we have opportunity.

To a young preacher, the apostle Paul wrote: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2).

Consider with me one more catchy saying! "God said it, I believe it; therefore it is true." Whether I believe it or not, if God spake it—it is true! The *veracity* of God's word does not depend upon any man's acceptance of it! "For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:3-4). Thus the proper sequence of the slogan above would be: "God said it, therefore it is true; I better believe it!"

Are you a Christian? If not, become one *today*! If you are already saved, whom have *you* taught about God's redeeming love? "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).

Lo, I Am With You Always

Ray Hawk

"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" (Matthew 28:19,20).

I Am With you Until the end of the World

What did Jesus mean when he said to the apostles, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? Most preachers say this means Jesus will be with *us* in 1989 until this ole world (heaven and earth) comes to an end. Is this what Jesus is saying? Brethren, it is true that Jesus is with us, but does *this* passage say he will be with us in 1989? I think not:

We have always understood that to determine the meaning of

a passage, we must ask several questions. First, who is speaking? Second, who is he speaking to? Third, does this have an application to us today? It is true that disciples are to go. It is true that disciples are to teach and immerse the taught. It is true that disciples are to teach these new disciples in all that Jesus commanded. But, the parallels stop there!

MARK 16:15-20 AND MATTHEW 28:19,20

Mark 16:15-20 and Matthew 28:19,20 are parallel. We have always recognized this when it came to "Go," "Preach/Make Disciples," "Baptize," and "Saved/Teaching them," We should recognize this when it comes to Mark 16:17-20 and Matthew 28:20b. The expressions, "The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following," and, "lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," are parallel and have reference to the same time period. That time period refers to the miraculous era. This is *not* to say Jesus isn't with us today. He is! But, this passage does not say Jesus is with us in 1989. It is referring to Jesus' being with the apostles during the miraculous era. That era came to an end and Jesus is no longer with anyone in the church on earth today as he was between Pentecost and the end of miracles!

End of the World

If Jesus is not with us today according to Matthew 28:20b, why does he say, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? What does the phrase, "unto the end of the world," mean if it does not refer to the end of the heaven and earth as we know it?

The expression "world" is taken from a Greek word, *aion*. This world is found 101 times in the KJV. It is translated as "world," "for ever," "eternal," "ages," and "ever and ever." The ASV translates the word "world" as found in the KJV as "age" in several places. Thayer, p. 19, shows the first definition of *aion* is "age,". His second definition is "an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity,"

Since Matthew 28:20b is parallel with Mark 16:17-20, Jesus

was saying to the apostles, "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." The age he had reference to was the end of the Jewish age. The miracles would last until Judaism's final and significant end! This is seen in Peter's words in Acts 2:16-20 where he gives the commencement, characteristics, and consummation of the miraculous era. Verses 19,20 of Acts 2 speaks of God's judgment on Judaism when the miracles would cease. That event has transpired, therefore the miracles have ceased. Jesus would work with them or be with them until the end of that age. Does this mean he is not with us today? No. But, keep in mind that Jesus is not talking about his presence with the apostles as we have his presence today. He was speaking in context with a miraculous presence.

If Jesus was talking about being with his disciples until the end of the miraculous era, does this mean when that world came to an end he would no longer be with them? If we parallel Matthew 28:20b with I Corinthians 13:8-10, I believe we can see what our Lord is saying to his apostles. In Corinthians Paul stated,

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

When the perfect or complete came, did every ounce of knowledge cease to exist? Did all language end at that point? Certainly not! However, *miraculously given* knowledge and languages ceased. Natural knowledge and languages did not, but miraculous knowledge and languages did. See the difference? Jesus said he would be with the apostles until the end of the age. When the miracles ceased, he ceased being with them *in that way*. Did his presence completely and totally cease? No. But, can we not see the difference between the two? Surely, by letting the Scriptures speak, we can see the *kind* of presence Jesus is speaking of in Matthew 28:20b. That kind of presence was with

the apostles to whom he spoke until miracles ceased. When miracles ceased, that kind of presence ceased.

The Gems Of Genesis

Jerry T Bramlett

The word Genesis means origin or beginning. The author of the great book of Genesis is Moses. Moses also wrote the first five books of the Bible which are named Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These five books are called the Pentateuch, which means the five-fold volume.

Man is very inquisitive being. Today people are asking such questions as what, when, who, how, etcetera. The very first verse of God's word answers these questions by stating, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). From this verse man's questions have been answered and we can go forward and learn many other valuable truths, because Genesis begins with God in the beginning.

In chapter two verses sixteen and seventeen we read, "And the Lord God commanded the man saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In chapter three we read where Adam and Eve transgressed this law by doing what God told them not to do. This is a great lesson on what sin is—the transgression of the law or going beyond what God says. This corresponds with the teaching of I John 3:4 which states, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The second lesson we can learn is the consequence of going beyond the law and committing sin. "For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished bringeth death" (James 1:15). Do these verses not contain enough warning to cause us to consider the seriousness of sin?

In chapter three and verse six we can see the parallel of I

John two and verse sixteen. We also can conclude that Eve committed sin because she loved the world. Let's look at the comparison below:

Genesis 3:6 Good for food, Delight to eyes, Make one wise.

I John 2:16—Lust of flesh, Lust of eyes, Pride of life.

Noah was given instructions to "Make thee an ark of gopher wood..." (Genesis 6:14). This verse is one of the greatest lessons on the law of exclusion. When Noah was told to use gopher wood this excluded every other type of wood, and there was no need to elaborate on the kinds of wood not to be used. In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 we are told to sing, and using the law of exclusion, we do not use the instruments of music. Just as gopher wood excluded the use of any other wood, so singing excludes any other type of music. The Bible doesn't have to say not to use instruments of music; for singing excludes instruments of music.

"And Jacob said, sell me this day thy birthright...and he sold his birthright unto Jacob...thus Esau despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:31-34). This is one of the saddest lessons to me in God's word. In looking at this lesson from the New Testament view and in being a child of God we sell our birthright when we cease to live the Christian life and quit the church. What do we lose when we sell our birthright today as members of the family of God? We lose the benefits expressed in the following scriptures: redemption—Romans 3:24; no condemnation—Romans 8:1; one body in Christ—Romans 12:5; all spiritual blessings—Ephesians 1:3; and salvation—II Timothy 2:10. In Hebrews 12:16 the writer refers to Esau as being a profane person. We today are like Esau when we sell our birthright because we become profane.

Many today catalogue the subject of sin and try to minimize it. Some claim that when one sins against a person this particular sin is not as bad as sinning against God. Whom do we sin against when we sin? In Genesis 39:7 Potiphar's wife said "lie

with me." Joseph answered and said, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God" (Genesis 39:9). David committed sin with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, killed in battle. David said speaking of God, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight..." (Psalm 51:4). Peter said to Ananias, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:4). Let us forever remember that when we commit sin, it is against God and sin cannot be minimized.

The great and wonderful book of Genesis closes by recording the death of Joseph in chapter fifty, verse twenty-six. Joseph is one of the greatest biblical characters in God's word and yet he died physically. Can we not see that unless Christ comes again in our life time that we must also die physically? "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Are you ready to die physically and stand in the day of judgment? If not, you need to submit to Christ and obey the gospel and live a Christian life to the very best of your ability the remainder of your days upon this earth.

The Christian's Duty Toward The Church

W.A. Holley

The word DUTY is an important word. Solomon wrote of "the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Jesus said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). In Romans 1:14, Paul writes of being a "debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise."

A "debtor" is a person who owes a debt. Are we willing and ready to pay our debts? As a child of God, you owe a debt which must be paid, if you wish to be saved eternally. What debt do we owe?

Our Duty in General

(1) We should be boosters of the church...not knockers: builders, not wreckers; fault fixers, not faultfinders (Ephesians 4:1-6).

(2) All Christians should speak with the same voice, promoting no division, no discord; but always urging peace and harmony among all members of the church (I Peter 3:1-12). A busybody can do untold harm (Exodus 23:1-2; II Thessalonians 3:11; I Peter 4:15).

(3) Christian conduct is very important. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). "But the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). All Christians should endeavor to make the church the most beautiful institution possible. (Romans 2:34; Titus 2:5; Philipians 1:27).

Our Duty in Particular

Christian, do your best to respect and obey the elders (Hebrews 13:7; Acts 20:17, 28). Help the deacons accomplish their God-given duties. Do your best to support the preachers, and all teachers as they seek to spread the word (Mark 16:14-16; Romans 1:16). Do not develop a rebellious attitude, but ever be willing to cooperate in all good works (I Corinthians 3:9; II Corinthians 6:1-8).

Duty Demands

The proper use of our time, talent, and money. How much time do you give to the support of the church? Thirty minutes on Sunday? An hour per week? An hour per month? Or perhaps, no time at all? How do you use your talents? For the Lord? or, against him? What about the use of your money? (Ephesians 5:16; Matthew 25:14-30; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 10:24-25).

We are obligated to help teach and defend the truth of God

(Jude 3; I Timothy 3:14-15; Philippians 1:17). If members of the Lord's church refuse to support the work of the Lord, who will support it? If we wish for the church to cease to exist, just sit back and do nothing. "If every member of the church were just like me, what kind of a church would this church be?" (Answer honestly)!

What are you worth to the church? Are you a "profitable," or an "unprofitable," member? (Matthew 25:14-30).

Individual Duty

Listen to this statement: About all the world knows of the church is what it sees in YOU! What does the world see in you? Does it see an honest, dependable, courteous person, who tries to be helpful to others? Or, does it see a person who stands aloof, refusing to become involved in the church and its activities? Usually, such members make very good critics; but, somehow they cannot seem to see themselves. Some church members have walked so as to become enemies of the cross of Christ: "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk, even as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose good is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." (Philippians 3:17-19, ASV). Those church members who drink, commit adultery, and who otherwise set bad examples, bring shame and reproach upon that church for which Jesus Christ died (Ephesians 5:22-32).

Each individual member of the church should be a good example of what Christianity truly is. Paul instructed Timothy to be an example of the believers in several areas:

(1) Be an example in word, or speech. Would Jesus use such speech?

(2) Be an example in conversation, or conduct. Would Jesus live as you live?

(3) Be an example in charity, or love. Jesus loved his enemies; could you?

(4) Be an example in spirit, or attitude (or disposition) (Philippians 2:1-5). All selfish ambition and vain conceit must be restrained: To have "the mind of Christ" is to have that inner disposition toward one another which characterized Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:1-5).

(5) Be an example in faith: Is your faith weak? or, strong? (Hebrews 11:1,3,6).

(6) Ever strive to be an example in purity—of mind, heart, and soul (Matthew 5:8; I Timothy 5:22).

Christian friend, will you truly commit yourself to the will and way of the Lord?

Have You Wondered About The Thousand-Year Reign ?

W.N. Jackson

Perhaps many who read this will not be familiar with the word "Premillennialism," but they will be familiar with the doctrines thus identified. Indeed, most in the Protestant religious world are exposed to premillennial teaching, and the great majority of the men who occupy the pulpits in the sectarian world are evangelists for premillennialism. We hope, in this brief treatment, to define the term and to give Bible references for the refutation of the doctrine.

The Doctrine of Premillennialism

This system has to do with teaching about the next coming of our Lord, and in particular with the establishment of His kingdom upon this earth. The word "premillennialism" is made up thusly: "pre" means "before"; "millennial" means "a thousand years"; and "ism" refers to "doctrine," or "system". Hence, the doctrine that teaches that the Lord will return to this earth before the establishment of His kingdom upon this planet. Proponents of this teaching insist that the Lord will return to this earth, set up His kingdom, and rule with his saints in a thousand-

year era of bliss. While the Bible teaches us that the Lord will appear one day, and that the Lord has a kingdom, and that the saints are citizens in that kingdom, the system known as pre-millennialism takes these truths and creates a man-made doctrine in conflict with plain Bible teaching. This is not surprising, since it has ever been Satan's tactics to handle the Word of God deceitfully. (2 Cor. 4:2).

Many Bible References to the Kingdom

The nation of Israel was, of course, familiar with the system of kings and kingdoms. All during the latter part of the Old Testament, God's prophets pointed to the coming of the Savior, and identified Him as a King who would set up His kingdom and rule over it. Isaiah promised that He would be a Governor and that the nature of His kingdom would be that of peace (Isa. 9:6, 7).

As the New Testament opens, John came with the message that the kingdom "is at hand," (Matt. 3:2) and Jesus began His ministry with the same message (Mark 1:15). Called the "King of the Jews," (Matt. 2:2), Jesus acknowledged this fact before Pilate (John 18:37). He had just made the point that His kingdom was not of a worldly sort, but spiritual (v. 36). This is a vital point, for the truth on the matter of the return of Christ, the establishment of the kingdom, the thousand-year period, and the disposition of the saints during the extent of the kingdom hinges on the nature of that kingdom.

The Identity of the Kingdom

As we just saw, both John and Jesus spoke of the kingdom being "at hand". Our Lord told some of his own generation that they would not see death until they also saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). This certainly told them that the kingdom, in whatever form, would come in that generation. In Matthew 16:18, 19 Jesus used the terms "kingdom" and "church" interchangeably. He stated that He would build the church, and that Peter would be given the keys of the kingdom. We follow Peter through the gospel records, and note that when He preached the message of the resurrected Lord in Acts 2, those who

obeyed the gospel were saved, added to the church. (v. 47).

We can also follow the word "power", which would be a mark of the coming kingdom. The Lord has promised this in view of some of his own generation. The apostles were told, before the Lord's ascension, that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from on high (Luke 24:49). Luke reminds us of that promise, identifying that power as the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8), whereby these apostles would be witnesses of the Lord unto all the earth. We note that the power came on the Day of Pentecost, (Acts 2:1-4) and that the church was the institution established on that occasion (v. 47). The kingdom was to come with power, and the power made possible the message which resulted in the establishment of the church!

Surely this truth is reinforced by Paul's declaration that there is just one body (Eph. 4:4), and he had earlier identified that body as the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). Paul and the members of the church at Colossae were in the kingdom (Col. 1:13), and so were John and those who received the Revelation epistle (Rev. 1:9). We might also note that among those with John in the kingdom were members of seven different congregations of the church of the Lord. (Rev., chapters 2 and 3) Indeed, there is one body, the church; that church is the kingdom that Jesus promised to build, and it came into being nearly 2,000 years ago, in Acts 2. It therefore is not future, as premillennial teaching has it. Since the kingdom is identified as the church, and since the church is the Lord's body (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23), a spiritual institution, there is no justification for men taking promises concerning the kingdom and looking for actual fulfillment by events upon this earth.

Regarding Premillennialism's Points

1. Unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies. Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matt. 5:17) As He fulfilled the prophecies concerning himself, so his kingdom, or church, fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. This is so, even though we might not be able to see the fulfillment in the most minute

detail. Remembering that the church is a spiritual institution, we see that premillennialism's error is in expecting literal, earthly fulfillment.

2. New heavens, new earth. Premillennialists cite 2 Peter 3:13, where this language is used, and then look for a renewed planet Earth as fulfillment. The Greek word for "earth" here is used of "earth, land, ground, country and world," and more would have to be given than just the word "earth" to denote this planet. But the Lord had promised that his own would be with him in "the Father's house", (John 14:2, 3); Paul stated that we will, at the end, rise to ever be with the Lord "in the air", (1 Thess. 4:17); Peter says that our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven (1 Peter 1:4), and he also states that this earth, and all things therein are to be burned up, dissolved (2 Peter 3:10, 11). Clearly, then, we see that the Lord and the righteous will not be upon this earth after his next appearing.

3. Revelation chapter 20. This is a favorite text of the premillennialists, yet it contains no point peculiar to that doctrine. They cite this passage to make the point that the Lord's own will reign with him a thousand years, verse 4, but they have to misuse the verse to get their point across. Note verse 4 carefully: John saw not all the righteous, but the souls of those beheaded—the martyrs. In the same verse, and of these martyrs, John said he saw them living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. He is simply saying that during this Christian dispensation, he saw the martyrs elevated to reign with Christ, and thus those of us yet here in this age can be encouraged that our labor is not in vain. We have hope of one day being with Christ, and we are buoyed up in this by the fact that John saw the martyrs with the Lord. There is no indication at all that the reigning was upon the earth. They were with Christ!

Premillennialism Abuses the Church

The doctrine of premillennialism simply makes the church an after-thought and a substitute arrangement brought in by God as men await the real kingdom. But Paul said that the church is to make known the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ (Eph. 3:10, 11). One

must believe the Bible, or the premillennial theory; both cannot be right !

Again, premillennialism takes kingship away from the Lord. By that doctrine, He is not king, since he has no kingdom as yet. This contradicts that which is the clearest proof in the New Testament to the effect that the Lord now reigns as king over his kingdom. It is found in 1 Corinthians 15:24-25. There, the apostle speaks of the end, and the fact that the kingdom will then be given to the Father (v. 24)—not established then, but given to the Father. It was already in existence before His coming, then. Paul continues, showing that the Lord reigns until all enemies are subdued, and the last enemy he will destroy is death. Note, He reigns until death is no more ! Then, while death is in existence, the Lord reigns. The proof we have, everyday, that the Lord reigns over his kingdom is the fact that men die, that morticians are still in business, and that daily journeys are still being made to cemeteries.

Friends, study this matter carefully. Note that the Old Testament pointed to the King and his kingdom, and that the New Testament shows the fulfillment of all this in the church Jesus purchased with his own blood. Those who obey the gospel are added into the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47); another way of stating that they enter into citizenship in the kingdom of God. Men look and wait in vain for an earthly kingdom upon this planet. When the Lord next appears, it will not be to set up his kingdom, but to give the existing kingdom to the Father. What a tragedy if you're not in that kingdom ! Make it sure by obeying the gospel today, and live faithfully until the end.

The Challenge of the Great Commission

Shelby G. Floyd

The greatest challenge ever committed to mortal man was couched in the words of the great commission.. This commission

was given by Jesus Christ to the eleven apostles on a mountain in Galilee. It is great because of the great authority which impowers it and sustains it. Jesus said, "...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18.) One of the many pursuits of man has been power and authority, but no one man has ever been able to achieve all the power and authority that there is in the earth, but Jesus has all power and authority, not only in the earth, but also in heaven. Therefore, he is pre-eminently qualified to give a commission that relates both to heaven and to earth, to this life and to the life to come.

The power, all of which Jesus claimed to have, both in heaven and earth, is the power of rule or government, and is generally translated authority. It is the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others, and obeyed. The power, or rule of government, which Jesus claims on this particular occasion is that which Isaiah predicted seven centuries before Christ claimed it. Speaking of Christ, Isaiah said that the government would be upon his shoulder, and, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." (Isa. 9:7).

There are only two kinds of power or authority, primary or delegated authority. Jesus states that all power and authority which he had, had been given to him. Therefore, Jesus received his power from someone else. God, the Father, delegated all power in heaven and earth to his Son, Jesus Christ, when he sent him into the world to be the savior of mankind. Near the end of his life, in his great high priestly prayer, Jesus said to his Father, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (Jno. 17:2.) The Father then gave Christ power over all flesh. Jesus exercised this kingly power through his kingdom or church after he had ascended to the right hand of God; angels, authorities and powers being made subject unto him. (I Pet. 3:22.) The power then which Christ has, transcends all earthly and heavenly powers, mights, principalities and dominions. (cf. Dan. 7:13-14; Eph. 1:19-21).

In view of the great authority which Jesus had, he said to the apostles, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. 28:19.) The antecedent of the pronoun *ye* refers to the eleven apostles. The charge was originally given to them in order that the word of God might be put on record. They were challenged to teach all nations. The word *teach* is a transitive verb which takes a direct object to complete the meaning. The object of their teaching was to be all nations. Therefore, the great commission is unlimited in its nature. It is to be a universal teaching program throughout the whole earth. It is not to be exclusive as to class or race as was the Old Testament system of religion. It is to be world wide in nature.

The word *teach* means to make a disciple, to instruct, to make scholars out of all nations. While it is not stated in this particular account of the commission what they were to teach, it is implied from what they were told to do. In Mark's account of this same charge, Jesus said, "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mk. 16:15.) Therefore, the subject matter was to be the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. (Rom. 1:16-17.) This implies that no one can enter into the kingdom of God without first being instructed in the kingdom. (Matt. 13:52.) That this is the case can be seen by Jesus' own words: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (Jno. 6:45).

The reason the apostles were charged with teaching the gospel to all the nations is because men must be instructed and taught before entering the kingdom of God. (cf. Heb. 8:10-11.) After the church was established this is exactly what the apostles did. We have an example in the fourteenth chapter of Acts of Paul and Barnabas preaching the gospel and making disciples out of many in the city of Derbe. (Acts 14:21.) The action then which Jesus commands is teaching or making scholars and learners, and the object of that action is to be all nations.

Jesus not only charged his apostles to teach all nations, but also to baptizé them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The object of the baptizing was to be *them*. The pronoun *them* refers to all nations, but in the context it is understood that they should baptize only those who had been taught or discipled out of all the nations. Therefore, first, they were to teach them, then baptize those who had been taught and were willing to submit to that command.

The term *baptizing* is a present active participle, which completes the idea of the leading verb in the sentence which is teach. A participle has the qualities of both a verb and an adjective, clearly implying that the baptizing was to be done to those who had been taught, and who had learned the gospel of Jesus Christ out of all the nations. The word baptizing comes from the root verb which means to dip, plunge or immerse. The element in which they were baptized is not stated in this passage but can be inferred from reading the scriptures concerning this subject elsewhere. They were to be baptized in water for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38).

Answering With Questions

Hugh Fulford

If a person anywhere in the world today learned of Christ, believed in Him as God's Son and his Savior, repented of his sins, and was immersed for the remission of his sins, would he, at that point, be a saved person? Could he be called a Christian?

If that person never joined a denomination, would he still be a Christian, a saved person?

Can a person today be a Christian without ever joining any denomination?

If 100 people became Christians and never joined any denomination but simply formed themselves into a congregation to worship and serve the Lord according to New Testament

teachings, would this be acceptable to God? Would doing such make the group a denomination?

If these 100 people increased the membership of their congregation to 200, 500, 1,000, or 2,000 by teaching others and converting them to Christ, would that make them anything other than what they were when they numbered 100?

If all across the country and all around the world, people continued simply to accept Christ and receive salvation from their sins on His terms and never joined any denomination, would that be acceptable to the Lord?

If these saved people simply continued to form themselves into congregations to worship and serve the Lord according to the New Testament, would the fact that eventually there might be 100, 200, 1,000 or even 20,000 of these congregations made up of people who had become Christians only make them into a denomination? If so, at what point did they become a denomination?

When one reads the New Testament, isn't this exactly what he finds happening? Were not the people of God simply called Christians? Were they not just simply "the church"?

Did they not just form themselves into congregations to worship and serve the Lord according to His will? True, they had problems, deficiencies, shortcomings and sins, but were they anything other than Christians, disciples, saints, brethren?

Is that same thing not possible in the 20th century or any other century? If not, why not?

If people in the 20th century (or any other) become Christians only without ever joining any denomination, would they not simply be "the church"? If not, why not?

What about it? Is undenominational Christianity possible today?

By a return to the New Testament, it is possible for people to be Christians only and for congregations of believers to be undenominational. May God hasten the day when this becomes a reality among all those who wear the name of Christ.