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EDITORIAL

The Church And Politics

Some religions not only involve themselves in spiritual matters, but they also take part in politics. Because they represent large numbers of people, and can influence the government of the country in which they live, or can persuade their people to vote for a particular man or party, then they are able to exercise a great amount of power. Also, some countries have a State Religion and that means that the government injects politics into religion. They may control many or all of the places of worship, pay their preachers or priests, make decisions on what will be allowed or not allowed in religious circles. They may limit or completely forbid religious freedom in their country. They tend to glory in their religion, and even use their religion to further their own cause.

The foregoing is just the opposite of the religion of Christ, or Christianity, as set forth in the Bible. Christ was accused of coming to be the king of the Jews and even the Apostles thought that he had come to restore the earthly kingdom of Israel. (Matthew 2:2; Acts 1:6). When crucifying him, they put a sign over

the head of Jesus which read, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (Matthew 27:37). Of course Christ had not come to be an earthly king, but rather he came to build his church, or kingdom, and to be its spiritual head or king. (Matthew 16:18; 1 Timothy 6:15).

The Lord's church is said to be a spiritual kingdom in that it has a king, a territory, a law, and citizens. Christ is its king (Revelation 19:16), the territory is the world in that Christians are to be found in nations throughout the world (Matthew 28:19, 20), its law is the New Testament (James 1:25), and its citizens are those who have obeyed Christ and therefore they wear his name. (Hebrews 5:8, 9; Acts 11:26).

The church of our Lord is not a political organization. Therefore it is not to be involved in politics. It does not form political parties. It does not attempt to speak for its members. It does not make political statements or support some particular politician. Its members are not encouraged to go into politics. There are too many temptations associated with a political office and the power that is associated with it. One may give in on various issues because he wants to please the people that vote for him. He may be tempted to accept bribes or to misuse his office. Those Christians who do become involved in these kind of things usually become unfaithful to the Lord and his church.

Only these religious groups, including some believers in Christ, who involve themselves in politics are the ones, in some cases, who may take up physical arms to support their cause. This would not represent pure Christianity because Christ at no time authorized his people or his church to use physical force. Christ and his followers are known for their stand for peace and love, and not for violence and war.

Although the church is universal, that is, it exists all over the world, it does not have a world-wide organization. It does not have an international head or headquarters. Even though it may exist throughout a particular country, it does not have a national organization. Neither does it have a head or headquarters for the

country in which it dwells. Instead, the church of Christ is made up of thousands and thousands of congregations throughout the world and each congregation is autonomous or independent from all the others. They have fellowship and cooperate with each other but no one congregation, or group of congregations, can dictate to the others. Each congregation is made up of a number of members, those who have obeyed Christ, and therefore being saved, the Lord has added them to his church. (Romans 16:16; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). Each congregation is to have its own elders and deacons to give leadership, provided there are two or more men in each congregation that can qualify. (1 Timothy; Titus 1). For example, if a congregation does not have two or more men qualified to serve as elders and deacons, then the men of that congregation are to give leadership until the time comes that they do have qualified men. Furthermore, each congregation is to have its own preachers and teachers. Each congregation is to conduct its own worship, have its own program of work, and if at all possible, to support itself. Of course above all else, Christ, is to be recognized as the head over each congregation (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23), and it is to be guided and directed in all of its activities by the Lord's word. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The church of Christ can exist in any country where religious freedom is allowed regardless of the politics or ideology practiced and followed. It may even exist in countries where it is not welcomed or where there is no religious freedom. But it represents a group of people who believe in freedom of religion, strives to live peaceably with all people, and desires to do good only. Its people are not radical, fanatical, or rebellious. They do not seek to separate themselves from others to become a law unto themselves. Rather, they desire to live among peoples of all kinds of backgrounds, religious or otherwise. In this way Christians have the opportunity to teach their friends and neighbours the gospel of Christ by word of mouth and by example. They have no desire to force or over-persuade anyone to become a Christian. They believe, however, that all should be taught concerning Christ that each one might make his or her own personal decision for or against Christ.

The Bible teaches that Christians are to be good and honest

people. They are to pay their debts. They are to live clean and pure lives. They are to be hard workers, providing a living for their families. They are to love one another and to live peaceably with all men. They are to be good citizens, obeying the law of the land, and paying their taxes. (Romans 12; Ephesians 4; Matthew 22:36, 37).

On one occasion the Pharisees, a religious sect of the Jews, approached Jesus concerning taxes. The record says, "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then said he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way." (Matthew 22:15-22).

Paul, writing to Christians at Rome, said, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues tribute to whom tribute is due;

custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." (Romans 13:1-7). In this lengthy statement, the inspired man of God is telling us that we are to respect those who are in power and to obey the laws of the land. He says that they serve God in that they accomplish his purposes. When we are law abiding citizens then we have nothing to fear. It is only when we break the law, generally, that we have reason to be afraid of those who are in authority.

In writing to the young preacher, Timothy, Paul said, "I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." (1 Timothy 2:1, 2). Peter declared, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." (1 Peter 2:17). These words speak for themselves.

No politician or government therefore has anything to fear from the church of Christ. They are not political, but spiritual. They do not oppose the law but respect it and try to obey it. They are the best citizens and are a credit to any country. Only those who would differ with them religiously could find fault with them.

Although they are not political, seek no political office, have no desire to have political power, have no authority to speak on political matters, and even though they desire always to obey the laws of the land, and make the best of citizens, this should not be counted as a weakness in them, but rather as being one of their strengths. Their resolve is to respect government and to obey the law, provided it does not ask them to do that which is contrary to God's will. They are a spiritual kingdom, and therefore their strength is in God their Father and Christ their Lord and Master. They are committed to that of putting God and his kingdom first in their lives. (Matthew 6:33). Should there ever be a conflict, they must obey God rather than man. (Acts 5:29). But any nation or group of people who will respect them, and be reason-

able in dealing with them, will have no problems with them, but will find them to be good and law abiding -citizens.



**associate
editorial**

Where Are All The Saved ?

If I ask you the question: "Where will be all the saved?" You will reply, "In heaven". This is absolutely true. There is no doubt about it. Speaking about the unrighteous people Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment," and then he added, "but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:46). In the Revelation of Jesus Christ which he showed to his servant, the apostle John, John saw a glimpse of heaven. Speaking about the saved he wrote in this book that he saw a great multitude before the throne of the Lord in heaven and he was told, "There are those which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb." (Revelation 7:14). Then the apostle said, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.....And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 21:3, 4; 22:3-5). So all the saved will be in heaven. They will live with God and Christ in heaven;

they will worship and praise God in heaven and there they shall reign for ever and ever. But where are the saved now?

Let the Bible answer our question. Upon the day of pentecost the apostles preached to a multitude of people. We read, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...Praising God, and having favour with all the people, And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:37-42, 47). The three thousand on the day of Pentecost were saved. They were lost in sin, but when they believed in Christ, and repented from sin, and were baptized for the forgiveness of sins, then the Lord saved them from their sin. But then what happened? The Lord added them to the church, to the body of the saved people. We read, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Who added? The Lord. To what? To the church. When? daily. Whom? The saved. Therefore all the saved are in the church. Not in a church. But in THE CHURCH. The Lord adds daily those who are saved, that is, who believe in him and repent of their sins and submit to him in baptism, to the church. This doesn't mean that he would add different people to different churches. He wouldn't add one to this church and another to that church. But he adds all the saved to *the church*, to *his church*, the one he himself built (Matthew 16:18), the one of which he himself is the head (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18), the one he gave himself for (Ephesians 5:25), and the one which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28). There is only one church of Christ, the Lord has but only one. Yes, it does matter to which church you belong. If you are

not in the church of Jesus Christ of which we read in the New Testament of the Bible, then you are in a wrong church. Surely, the Lord didn't add you to the wrong one, but you yourself have chosen to become a member of it or your parents had chosen for you and you have accepted it without investigation in light of what the Bible teaches about the church. Are you a member of the church of Christ, to which he adds the saved? If not, then do what the people did on the day of Pentecost. If you will, then the Lord will save you and add you to the church, to his church.

What About The Thief On The Cross?

Robert R. Taylor

THE PENITENT THIEF

Matthew, Mark and John all mention the fact that Jesus was not crucified alone. He was crucified in the middle and on his right was a robber and on his left was another robber. No doubt the executioners intended to leave the impression to all passers-by that Jesus Christ was the worst one of the three. If not, why was he conspicuously placed in the middle? From Luke alone we learn of the penitence of one of the two thieves. Luke alone informs us of a request he made to Jesus and of the Lord's response to that penitent request. The Bible says, "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:39-43).

Note is now taken relative to what the thief did and said.

Then note will be taken of what Jesus said in response and what is comprehended in our Lord's reply to the dying thief that day on the brutal brow of cruel Calvary. This man was really a thief or robber. The Bible calls him a malefactor or robber. While on the cross he confessed that both he and his fellow-robber were simply getting their just due. He therefore was not an innocent man who was falsely accused and was being unjustly executed. When he was first placed on the cross and near the One who occupied the Middle Cross that day he joined in with his fellow-robber and with the malicious passers-by who hurled words of ridicule and contempt into the sinless face of the crucified Christ. The Bible tells us in Matt. 27:44, "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." This must have been near the beginning of the six hours that Jesus spent upon Calvary. But as the time passed and one of the thieves observed the demeanor of the Lord upon the cross he experienced a change of heart. According to Luke when the still impenitent thief was urging in skeptical unbelief for the Christ, if indeed he were the Christ, to save all three of them, the now penitent one spoke in defence of Christ. He reminded his fellow-robber that they were both dying justly. The deeds called for their crucifixion. He affirmed of Jesus that He had done nothing amiss. Does this not lead us to believe that he must have known something about Jesus before the three of them were nailed to the rugged crosses that day? How did he know Jesus was totally innocent? He could not have learned it from his fellow-robber. He could not have learned it from the passers-by, the scribes, the chief priests and elders because they all thought He was getting what he richly deserved. They uniformly believed Him to be an imposter.

The now penitent thief made a request of Jesus. He called Him Jesus according to the American Standard Version and Lord according to the King James. Be it remembered that the name Jesus means Saviour. He requested to be remembered when the Lord Jesus came into His kingdom. How did he know about the kingdom? He surely did not learn about it from what is recorded from Jesus on the cross for the kingdom was not mentioned in any of the Lord's seven statements. He could not have learned of it from the passers-by or from the Jewish leaders for they did not

believe Jesus was ever going to possess a kingdom. He must have had some prior acquaintance with Jesus, with John the Baptist or with some of the disciples of either John or Jesus. If he had ever heard John preach, then he would have heard John say something like this, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). If he ever heard Jesus or any of His apostles preach, he would have heard something like this from Jesus, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" and from the apostles the sentiment, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; 10:7). His concepts of the kingdom were probably hazy just as the apostles' concepts of it at the time were and yet he associated Jesus with a kingdom, with a coming into His kingdom and with the hope that Jesus would remember him, a dying thief, when he came into that kingdom. All of this is very significant.

THE LORD'S RESPONSE TO THIS PENITENT REQUEST

Just how did the Lord respond to this request from the dying thief? By promising the penitent thief that the two of them would be together that very day in what Jesus called paradise. Now the Lord surely was not talking about their occupying the same sepulchre that day for they were not entombed together at all. He was speaking of their spirits as being together. Jesus knew that as soon as His spirit left the crucified body of clay that He would be going to paradise. He promised that the penitent thief would be in the same location with Him.

Just what did the Lord mean by Paradise? Paradise basically means a garden or place of pleasure. But it does not always refer to the same location. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul referred to his being caught up into the third heaven as being Paradise. In Revelation 2:7 Jesus promised those at Ephesus who overcame that they would have the right to eat of the tree of life "which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Paradise, therefore, can refer to heaven. But Jesus did not go to heaven during the period between His death on Friday afternoon and His resurrection the following Sunday morning. When he appeared to Mary just subsequent to His resurrection He told her in John 20:17 that He had not yet ascended to His Father in heaven. Hence the Paradise He went to

between death and His resurrection was other than heaven itself. Is there a clue in the Bible as to where he went? Indeed there is. The word Hades refers to the place of the unseen or the place where all spirits go between death and judgment. The Hebrew term Sheol in the Old Testament referred to the same place. Jesus spoke of this realm in Luke 16:19-31. The realm of Hades or Sheol has two compartments which are separated by an impassable gulf. One of these is styled Abraham's bosom and is a place of comfort; the other is called torments and is a place of anguish and pain; it is a place of no relief. In Luke 16 Abraham and the righteous Lazarus were in the place of comfort; the rich man was in torments. We do no grievance at all to the teachings of the Scriptures when we say that Jesus went to this place of comfort or what He himself called Paradise. There just is no other conclusion to reach than this one about what He meant by Paradise since He was not speaking of the grave and He was not speaking of His going to Heaven late that Friday afternoon—the day of his crucifixion and of the death also of the penitent thief.

DID THE LORD THEN PROMISE THE THIEF SALVATION?

Indeed so! All those who go into this place of comfort called Abraham's bosom or Paradise will be destined to go to heaven after judgment. This is the intermediate place where all righteous spirits will go and will remain until judgment. There all the righteous spirits will receive comfort until judgment. Then all the righteous will be taken home to heaven. The wicked are kept in the other compartments of Hades until judgment. There they are punished. At judgment they will be consigned to an eternal Gehenna or a devil's hell forever. Let it be remembered that Jesus promised the thief salvation before He died and before the terms of His will went into effect. Jesus promised this to the dying thief before He gave the Great Commission. We cannot be saved like the thief was for you and I are not in his position and can never be in his unique position. Let us look to the conversions in the book of Acts for models of what is demanded for us toward being saved and not to the thief on Calvary.

Components Of Salvation

Several important components are involved in the salvation of the soul. These components, or elements, each work together in their own individual way to effect salvation. If any one of the components was omitted from the grand plan of redemption, the reconciliation of man with God would be aborted. Paul, in one verse of Holy Scripture, mentions these components of salvation. It is for our study to consider them and appreciate them as we should. Notice an examination of the passage and each component as they are mentioned. The passage reads: "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:16).

HE—This refers to Christ, the one who effects a reconciliation between man and God. He does this through His mediatorial office where He through both His human and divine personality can effectively mediate for man. (see: 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 7:25).

RECONCILE—Reconcile denotes "to change, exchange." Man is alienated from God through transgression of God's law. The transgression of God's law is sin (1 John 3:4). Sins and iniquities separate man from God. In reconciliation man's position is changed from that of sin and enmity with God to a position of favour and grace with God. In reconciliation man exchanged the doomed fate of the sinner for the blessed hope of salvation and eternal life. God reconciles man unto Himself by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. He did commit the ministry of reconciliation to the apostles in that they were given the gospel plan to preach whereby man could avail himself of the atoning blood and be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

GOD—God has been offended by man's sinful transgressions and as a result of these sinful acts man has separated himself from God's grace and is held in enmity by God (Jas. 4:4; Isa. 59:1, 2). God in justice and through love for man had formed a plan (often spoken as the "mystery of God") whereby man could, if he would,

again attain unto a friendly relationship with God having his transgressions forgiven.

BOTH—Both is representative of mankind, Jew and Gentile specifically. Both Jew and Gentile were alienated from God because of sins which they both had committed. "There is none righteous, no, not one—for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," Paul said of them (Rom. 3:10, 23). In reconciliation the enmity that had existed between God and man is removed and both Jew and Gentile can attain to a friendly relationship with God.

IN ONE BODY—The one body is the place where Christ has reconciled man unto God. Reconciliation is in the one body which is the church of Christ. "...He is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18). God has "put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body..." (Eph. 1:22, 23). Therefore, one is reconciled unto God in the church of the Lord, that church being the one body. Peter said, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). The saved are the reconciled. All saved are added to the church which is the one body.

BY THE CROSS—The cross of Jesus is the means of reconciliation. Reconciliation is "by" or "through" the merits of the cross. The expression "by the cross" is symbolic of the suffering, and bleeding, and death of Christ at Calvary. In that suffering and death man is reconciled unto God. Without it man could not be reconciled to God. More exactly man is reconciled by "the blood of his cross. (Col. 1:20). "...being now justified by his blood...we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:9, 10).

The message of the redeeming power of the blood of Christ is spoken of as "the preaching of the cross (which) unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Hence, "the cross" is graphic symbolism of not only the atoning effect of Christ's blood but also the message of salvation, which salvation is made possible by the sacrificial death of Christ on the blood-stained cross.

SLAIN THE ENMITY—The enmity being that which first caused the separation between man and his God, namely, sin. "...your iniquities have separated between you and your God..." (Isa. 59:2). The power of the cross of Jesus has overcome and destroyed those barriers which separate man from man, and especially the sinner from God. That enmity (cause of alienation) has now been destroyed by grace on God's part, through faith on man's part, and by the blood on the part of Christ. This is truly the "good news" of the gospel (Rom. 3:23-26; Titus 2:11-14).

THEREBY—The marginal note reads "or, in himself." Christ Himself, at Calvary sacrificed Himself and reconciled man unto God. It was through His sufferings and death that He was made perfect and thus became the cause of our eternal salvation (Heb. 2: 9, 10).

This passage, as we have seen, located reconciliation in the one body which is the church. It also locates this salvation "in Himself." Thus, salvation, or reconciliation, is to be found only in Christ, in His body. This new relationship is clearly taught and understood to be in Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Here, in Ephesians 2:16, we see the components of salvation working together to the salvation of man's soul. Each plays a precious part in reconciliation. Man, in the obedience of faith avails himself of the wonderful blessing of salvation by taking advantages of God's plan of redemption.

The Conversions Of Acts Eight

Ernest S. Underwood

In the eight chapter of the book of Acts there is recorded the accounts of three different conversions. These are: the people of

the city of Samaria, Simon the sorcerer, and the eunuch of Ethiopia. In each case the evangelist was Philip. In this article we shall notice the background, the teaching done, and the response in each of these conversions.

This chapter begins with the persecution of the church. Saul of Tarsus is the leader of it. The record states that he "laid waste the church" causing the disciples to be scattered from Jerusalem. As they left the city we are told that they "went everywhere preaching the word."

Philip went to the city of Samaria and began to preach Christ to the people. In verses 5 through 12 we have the conversion of these people. Let us notice some things about it.

First, we note that a preacher was necessary. Jesus had stated in Mark 16:16 that the gospel was to be preached. "Unless people hear, they cannot believe because 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'" (Rom. 10:17). We note secondly that Philip preached Christ unto them. His message was not political, nor did it deal with some supposed social injustice—He PREACHED CHRIST! Notice that verse five states this fact, then verse twelve states, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." This is nothing short of a divine commentary on Jesus' statement in Mark 16:15-16. It is recorded in this passage, as already noted, that the Lord gave the commission to the disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel. He did not indicate that every heart would be receptive, but when this gospel was received into the good hearts, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." This is exactly the formula which Philip followed at Samaria. These people were not saved from their past sins until they heard the gospel, believed the gospel, and obeyed the gospel which was preached by Philip. Who would argue that they were?

Next, we come to Simon. This man was one who dealt in trickery and deception. He had a powerful influence over the citizens of Samaria, and was held in high esteem by them. He

would compare favourably with the so-called miracle workers of today who deceive multitudes of people with their false claims. However, unlike these workers of Satan today, Simon believed the preaching of the evangelist Philip as he proclaimed the gospel. He became obedient to that truth by being baptized for the remission of his sins.

The third case of conversion in this chapter is that of the eunuch. This conversion is recorded in verses twenty-six through forty. Those involved in the conversion were the angel of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, Philip and the eunuch.

The angel's work was to instruct Philip to leave Samaria and go to Gaza. The Holy Spirit's work was to tell Philip to "join thyself to this chariot," and to supply the words which Philip would preach to this man. Let it be noted that neither the angel nor the Holy Spirit operated directly upon the lost man. We note again that the commission to preach the gospel was given to men-human beings. The Lord never once violated this rule in anyone's salvation. In every conversion of which we have divine record the Lord directed his disciples to tell other men how to be saved. He never once told a lost man directly what to do to be saved.

In this narrative of the eunuch's conversion we note the following facts. First, the eunuch was already a religious man. He had been to Jerusalem to worship, evidently according to the Law of Moses. Secondly, he was a studious and serious person. He was not wasting his time, but was busy reading the Scriptures. We note thirdly, that he was not a haughty or proud man. He recognized his need for assistance and asked for it. Also, he showed willingness to accept the gospel even though it required him to change his religion. Fourthly, we notice that the preacher, Philip, used the Scripture to preach Christ, as he had done previously to those of Samaria. After Philip "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus," we find the eunuch immediately requesting baptism for the remission of his sins.

It is interesting at this point to note the contrast between the preaching of Philip, and that of many denominational preachers of

today. In one of his "My Answer" articles, and in answer to the question, "Why is it I've never heard you speak of baptism as one of the necessary steps to salvation?" Mr. Billy Graham states, "I certainly believe in Christian baptism. As an evangelist, however, my task is to announce the evangel, or the 'good news!' After showing that the good news is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ he further states, "If baptism were a requirement for salvation, we would certainly say that." He then attempts to make an argument about the thief on the cross. (See the articles by Robert Taylor, concerning this very argument). Graham claims that he preaches Christ but not baptism because according to him, baptism is no part of the gospel. Philip, on the other hand, preached Christ unto the eunuch and immediately this man inquired of the possibility of being baptized. Thus we find this distinction between inspired Philip, and uninspired Mr. Graham. Which one do you think is reliable? As Joshua said in the long ago, "As for me and my house we will serve Jehovah."

A final point which we would notice about the conversion of the eunuch is the action and the element of baptism. The record states that "they came unto a certain water." Upon coming to the water the eunuch said. "See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" This shows that the baptism required in the Great Commission is water baptism. After his confession of faith in Christ, not that his sins had been pardoned, we find both Philip and the eunuch going down into the water. Here, Philip baptizes the eunuch, and they both came up out of the water. It is also worthy of note that no vote had to be taken on the eunuch before he could be baptized. After being baptized the eunuch, now forgiven of his past sins, goes on his way rejoicing.

In these accounts of conversions in the eight chapter of the book of Acts we notice that the gospel must be preached, it must be believed, that scriptural confession of faith, must be made, and that one must be baptized for the remission of sins. May each reader prepare his heart for the reception of the word of God, and then may each one have the courage to cast of the error of denominationalism and embrace the gospel which is able to save man's soul.

Beginning Again

Sometimes you may hear someone wishing that they could live their life over again. Such is wishful thinking and folly indeed. Time passed is gone forever; the past will never come before us again. It is sad that one has made such a failure of life that one would want to go back and live it again. Although one cannot live their past life again they can, in a sense, begin life anew. They can be born again.

The past is unchangeable, the future is uncertain but it always holds forth hope and promise. Today is the day of opportunity for action. "Today is the day of salvation." Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the new life; about beginning over again (John 3:1-8). Nicodemus realized impossibility of going backward and living his life again. He, as we should, was to realize that it is a "beginning again" that is most essential.

Jesus' expression, "be born again" alludes to a process; a law of birth is inherent in the statement. All that are born are born according to a certain process or law. In speaking of physical birth there is an allusion to process or law of physical birth: male and female, the planting of the seed, the reception of the seed and after a period of time the birth of new life. Jesus alluded to God's spiritual law of the new birth, that spiritual process whereby one may become a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

The spiritual law and the physical law are alike in principle with each, according to law, bringing forth of its kind. The spiritual law of the new life demands that there first be the planting of the seed, then the reception of the seed which is then followed by the birth of new life. The spiritual seed that gives life is the divinely inspired word of God. Life begets life. The living word produces spiritual life. The words of Christ "are spirit, and are life." (Jn. 6:63). Paul informs us that "the word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12). The word is alive and active in the process of the spiritual birth. The word is spoken of as "the seed" by which men are begotten and born unto spiritual life (Lk. 8:11;

James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:22).

The implantation of the seed is not miraculous. In fact, there is nothing miraculous about the spiritual birth. It is all according to God's spiritual law. The seed is planted through or by the process of teaching and preaching. Those who are saved are those who have received the instructions of the word: "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be taught of God. Everyman therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). None can come to Christ for salvation without his being taught, without his learning the will of God as revealed in His word. So, the spiritual seed is the spiritual truth which ultimately brings forth new life, or spiritual life.

The spiritual seed must be planted in the right place in order for it to bring forth its fruit. As surely as a grain of corn will not take root and bring forth its fruit when sown on the black asphalt of a busy highway, neither will it bring forth its fruit when sown on fallow, thorny or rocky ground. When good seed is sown (planted) on good ground it will bring forth fruit "an hundred fold." When the word of God is received in the heart of honest men and women who want to know the truth, who want to do God's will and be saved then it will have its fruit of spiritual life (Luke 11:4-15). The reception of the spiritual seed in the "honest and good heart" will have the effect of purifying the soul: "Seeing ye have purified your soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit... Being born again...by the word of God..." (1 Peter 1:22, 23).

To receive the seed is to hear its declaration of facts, believe its promises, and to obey its commands. Anything less than this is to reject the means whereby one may be born again. Such rejection is to "quench the Spirit," is to "resist the Spirit" for that word is the revelation of the Spirit of God.

Jesus further told Nicodemus that one must "be born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5). The Spirit's participation in the new birth is, as we have seen, in the revelation of living truth which gives spiritual life. "Born of water" implies a birth from water, or out of water. Those who have heard, who have received

the teaching of the word of God, giving heed to its commandments to repent and to confess Christ as Lord, then are buried with their Lord in the water of baptism are born of water and Spirit. They then are raised from that baptism to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4); "...having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God...And you...did he make alive together with Him having forgive us all our trespasses" (Col. 2:12, 13).

It was for this reason and in compliance to God's spiritual law of the new birth that Peter said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized? And he commanded them to be baptized..." (Acts 10:47, 48).

To enjoy the "new life" one must abide by God's spiritual law of the new birth. To be a new creature one must be baptized into Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). "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).

One should not want to go back and start life again. Likely the stream of life would run along its old course. Had Nicodemus been able to "enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born" such would have had no effect on his spiritual nature, his soul: Jesus taught him that the part of man that is to be born again is that which, like the unseen wind, is invisible to the eye. It is the spirit nature, not the fleshly, that must be born again. The same truth revealed to Nicodemus applies to man today. "Ye must be born again."

Is It Nothing To You ?

Michael Greene

As Jeremiah the weeping prophet lamented the coming destruction of Jerusalem and Babylonian captivity, he asked the people, "It is nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" (Lamentations

1:12). Many of the residents of Jerusalem were unconcerned and filled with apathy at the pending doom of Jerusalem and fate of its great and proud people.

The unconcern of the people of Jerusalem and Judah at their own fate is not unparalleled in our society today. Our society is in deep trouble due to the rising immorality. Sin is still a reproach to any people. The standards of morality are declining and crime rates rising today. Is it nothing to you?

Yet more serious than this is the increase of religious apathy. Is it nothing to you that the very Son of God left heaven, took upon Him the form of a man and suffered death for you (Phil. 2:5-11)? Is it nothing that He endured the suffering and agony of Calvary to save you from your sins? Is it nothing to you to know that by your religious apathy He is crucified afresh and put to an open shame (Heb. 6:6)?

Is it nothing to you that He has asked you to respond to His great love by obedience to the gospel of Christ? Many today claim to have been saved yet have not done all that God has commanded them to do in His word. Is it nothing to you that so many have been deceived by false teachers and preachers who pervert the word to the point that any and all unrighteousness is tolerated in the lives of men (Gal. 1:6-9; Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Tim. 4:1-4)?

After His resurrection, Jesus commissioned His apostles to carry the message of belief, repentance, baptism, and remission of sins into the whole world that they might hear, obey, and be saved (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 23:44-49). This is what God expects men to do; not just the part we want to do, but all of it. Is it nothing to you?

Is it nothing to you that you are rapidly passing down life's road toward death? And after death comes the judgment. These are two appointments all men must meet. The Hebrew writer tells us, "It is appointed unto man once to die, then cometh the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). All men will die and be judged by their lives and deeds (2 Cor. 5:10). Is this nothing to you?

Because of the Babylonian captivity, the Jews of Jeremiah's time learned to love the city of Jerusalem and all that it stood for. Under the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah they were able to return and rebuild the city and enjoy God's blessings once again. Many today need to awake out of their slumber and realize the need to prepare and be vigilant and watchful. There is no room for apathy in the lives of Christians today. Make it something to you!

Sin Is The Enemy

One may encounter many enemies in the course of a lifetime. Some of these enemies may have been made by unwise or sinful actions that we have committed. There is such as an enemy without cause (John 15:25). All have an enemy notwithstanding the often heard affirmation concerning some good man, "He didn't have an enemy in the world." It may be that one does not have many enemies but it is also true that all who follow Christ have enemies (John 15:18, 19).

The chief enemy of all mankind is Sin. Every grave opened to receive the remains of a loved one was opened because of sin. Every heartbreak, every tear of sorrow, every ache of pain is only the fruition of sin. Sin has humbled every proud spirit and robbed every happy heart. Sin has put its black defiling mark on the frame of every mortal being. No one has escaped the ravages of sin. Death to the race came by sin; death and sin have been man's familiar and destructive companions throughout the ages. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Sin has left none untouched; Nay, even Jesus! Though He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22) it was for sins, the sins of man, that He went to Calvary's cross (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:4-6).

Sin is the great Separator. Sin separates man from his fellow

many setting an enmity between them that they often are unable to overcome. Sin separated Cain from Abel, Joseph from his brethren, Judas from his fellow apostles. Worse yet, sin separates man from his God: "...your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you..." (Isa. 59:2). In separation from God there is also separation from the Holy City in eternity for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. 21:27). One separated from God by sin is one who lives in sin, or in the condemnation of sin and does not have the blessing of saving grace and the warm hope of salvation (1 John 2:25).

Sin demonstrates its power today. All about us we see that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19) as we go our rounds in "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4) which is ruled "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). Sin is bondage enforced by its prince, Satan, who "was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and father of it" (John 8:44). Satan is Sin personified. Those who champion any cause other than truth, whose affections lie other than with Christ, whose allegiance is to any other than God, are under the bondage of Sin and have become the servants of Satan. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). Sin is man's deadly enemy; Christ is man's Saviour from it. Christ is man's only deliverance from the condemnation of sin and Satan. The Christ is able to restore to the race all that has been lost to sin. Where sin separates man from God, Christ reconciles man to God (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). Where sin brings death Christ gives eternal life (Rom. 6:23; John 10:28). Where sin leads in paths of shame, pain, heartache, despair and death Christ will "Shew unto you a more excellent way...A new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us..." (1 Cor. 12:31; Heb. 20:28). Christ is the Redeemer, having paid the price of sin "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is

the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage?" (Heb. 2:14, 15); and let us remember that man's danger is not in death. Let us all look to Christ who gives us the victory through faith in Him and His sacrificial and redeeming blood. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:56, 57).

Salvation Is In Christ

W. Ray Duncan

The greatest thrill that mortal man has ever had is the knowledge that his sins are forgiven, and that he is a child of God. The greatest disappointment that mortal man will ever have is to learn, too late, that his sins were not forgiven, and he must listen to those terrible words, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21). Not only did Jesus not know some of those religious workers, he said, "I never knew you." Men are slow to learn that all that is religious is not acceptable to God. The Master himself said, "This people draweth high unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8, 9). What a horrible thought—a lifetime of religious work—all to be rejected at the last great day because the doctrines were from men and not from God.

We are ever made aware of the struggle of Armageddon, the forces of right versus the forces of wrong: this battle is fought daily! Religionists, on the one hand, and the non-religionists, on the other, continually degrade the church of the living God. The religionists declare, on the one hand, that a man does not have to be a member of the Lord's church to be saved; that the church never saved anyone; that Jesus is the only Saviour the world has; and that all a sinner must do to be saved is just believe on the

Lord. The non-religionists aver, on the other hand, that the church is filled with dishonest, immoral hypocrites; that they are better and more righteous than those in the church, and that they would rather risk their chances at the judgment out of the church, rather than in it.

It is true that Jesus saves, and that he is the world's only Redeemer; but whom and under what provisions or conditions does he save? True enough, and regrettably so, there are often dishonest, immoral, hypocrites in the church, but the number is far fewer than the non-religionists would have us believe. Further, the person who contends that he is a non-member of the church because there are hypocrites in the church is, himself, a full-fledged hypocrite—that is, his very avowal is a mere pretense. The study of this lesson will show unequivocally how that salvation is in Christ, and to be in Christ is to be in His body, and His body is the church (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 1:18, 24). Unless the Scriptures are wrong, this has to be right!

In review of what the Roman Christians had done, and which some of the Jews would not do. Paul said, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). Almost all Bible scholars agree that a public confession of Christ is required before baptism and salvation. Many of the chief rulers believed on Christ, but they refused to confess their belief because they loved the praise of men more than of God (John 12:42). This kind of a person cannot be saved!

In answer to the Ethiopian eunuch's question, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" the preacher said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." No man has the right to demand more—none dare to ask less (Acts 8). On the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the people had heard the sermon delivered by Peter, they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter's answer clearly indicates that he understood that they had sinned in rejecting Jesus, and wanted to know what to do to be saved. Therefore

he said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (and he even explained why they should do this) for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Let it be remembered that apart from Jesus no one has forgiveness: in Jesus ALL may be forgiven! All stipulations and conditions are clearly set forth in the Scriptures. Thus far we have noted that faith in Christ; repentance from all sins; confession of the name of Christ; and immersion in water are all likewise requirements of entering into the body of Christ where salvation is. Joining the church or a church is not a requirement of God for salvation: God "adds to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). The word church is used only to establish the relationship of God's children to this world: they are "the called out," and this word is translated "church." Christ is the Saviour—and all the saved are in Christ.

What Baptism Is Not

Grady M. Miller

Often and oftentimes false teachers in their zeal to omit baptism for the remission of sins as a part of God's scheme of redemption, go on and on about what baptism is not. With an alarming disregard for the authority of the New Testament Scriptures, they assert that baptism is not for the remission of sins, baptism is not essential to salvation, baptism is not a part of the saving gospel, baptism is not part of "preaching Christ," etc. We, too, would like to point out some things that baptism is not; however, we warn you, our list will be quite different from some you might have heard since ours is rooted in book, chapter, and verse—straight from the Bible. To begin with, baptism is not an optional matter; instead, it is a command of God. Jesus commissioned His disciples to go world-wide teaching and "baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost..." (Matt. 28:19). On the

day of Pentecost alien sinners were commanded to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). And, what could be plainer than Acts 10:48? Peter brought this message to Cornelius and his household: "And he Commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Surely, our respect for the word of God forbids us to make an arbitrary distinction between an important command of God and an unimportant one, an essential command and an unessential one. Therefore, we ought not parrot such man-made slogans as "You will want to be baptized after you are saved," or "Believe, get saved, and then be baptized." No, we must believe and teach exactly what Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Then again, baptism is not a mere sign that sins have already been forgiven; rather, baptism is associated with the actual washing away of sins. Ananias commanded Saul of Tarsus to "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). While we would not want to deny that there is much in baptism that is symbolic—after all, it is an apt figure of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Himself—still, we miss the meaning of baptism altogether if we reduce it to just a mere sign of forgiveness. Paul teaches in Romans 6 that in baptism—of course preceded by faith and repentance—we put off the old man of sin and become a new creature; indeed, we are "born of water and of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5).

And, finally, baptism is not a work of man; how could it be, seeing as how God has bound it on man? If baptism is a work at all, then, it must therefore be a work of God! When one is baptized for the remission of sins he has done no more nor less than that which God commanded him to do: Furthermore, hear the apostle Paul: "Not by words of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). What else could this washing of regeneration be but baptism? Obviously, it is not Holy Ghost baptism or any renewing of the Spirit since that also is listed in the verse—they are not the same thing but they work toward the same result. So, Paul vetoes the popular idea that baptism is a work of man; to the contrary, like faith (John

6:29), baptism is a work of obedience commanded by God Almighty.

Every excuse and quibble raised against baptism for the remission of sins can be destroyed by a careful study of the Bible. Do not be misled by the efforts of Satan and his ministers to undermine God's plan of salvation. Just remember, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

What Does The Bible Teach Concerning The Lord's Supper ?

1. It was instituted by the Lord (Matt. 26:26-29; Lk. 22:14-23).

2. It was taught by the apostles (I Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-26; Acts 2:42).

3. It consists of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. (I Cor. 11:26; Lk. 22:13, 17-20).

4. It was observed every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

5. It was not for anyone, but for Christians (I Cor. 11:27-29; Lk. 22:18-20; Acts 20:7; Matt. 26:26-29; Jno. 3:5; Mk. 16:15, 16)

6. It was not a sacrament, eucharist, designed only for priests in a clergy, literally the body and blood of Jesus, to be observed spasmodically.

The church of Christ meets on the first day of the week to break bread, sing, pray, study the Bible to encourage one another in keeping the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. This is scriptural and right.

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