

## *The Criminal on the Cross*

David Halbrook

One of the subplots of the crucifixion of Jesus involved the conversation of Jesus and one of the robbers being crucified.

He said, *Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom* (Lk. 23:42). Why would a dying man ask another dying man to remember him? Why would he ask about a future kingdom? How did he know about that kingdom? This thief knew they would live after death and previously heard someone tell about that kingdom. He had lived in rebellion to the truth he knew---spiritual things were not new to him.

Jesus exceeded the robber's request, saying *...today, you will be with Me in Paradise* (Lk. 23:43). Jesus forgave Him of his sins, knowing all things about this man we do not (How and what did he know about the kingdom? Had he been baptized by John [Mk. 1:5]?). The *Paradise* Jesus referred to is the place of rest in Hades which will end when God raises and judges us all (Acts 2:31; Rev. 20:13-14).

Do the gospel writers contradict each other, in what they write? Can we be forgiven of sins exactly as the robber was? Is baptism essential today? Contact us for a free CD covering these questions or listen to it on our website today.

-- Our article appearing in *Arkansas Weekly*.

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### Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for these among us: Ed & Janice White, John & Erlene Ledgerwood, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Joyce Ratliff, Ed Koettel, Maxine Epperson, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians. (Also, Ben Calderon with whom we fellowship [share] in Conway). [See the overhead charts for other prayer requests]

Check the lists on the bulletin board at the back from time to time (Lord's Supper preparation, roadside sign, men leading when we assemble).

*Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.*

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# The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*  
church of Christ--Quail Valley

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## *Pastors, Bishops, and Presbyters*

Jim Stauffer

In 1 Tim. 3:1 we are told, "Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Verse 2 begins, "The bishop therefore must be," and follows that with a somewhat lengthy list of qualifications. The importance of these qualifications is simple, he is to take care of the church of God (see verse 5). It is further emphasized in Paul's meeting with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17) when he said to them in Acts 20:28, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood."

There are three terms used interchangeably for this position in the church of the New Testament. An elder/presbyter (*presbuteros*) is defined as literally elder, older, senior. In the Christian churches those who being raised up....were appointed to have spiritual care of and exercise oversight over the churches. A pastor/shepherd (*poimen*) is a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks. Pastors guide as well as feed the flock. A bishop/overseer (*episkopos*) is a superintendent, officer in general charge of the church. A man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done are done rightly (Definitions taken from *Strong's Dictionary of Bible Words* and *Thayers Greek-English Lexicon*).

We further learn each of these terms are descriptive of the same people. They describe different attributes and responsibilities of those men who hold the position of elder. For instance, Paul met with the elders of Ephesus. (Acts 20:17) He then referred to them as bishops in verse 28. Peter speaks to elders and tells them to, tend (*poimanio* - shepherd) the flock which is among you taking the oversight (*episkopeo* - bishop) thereof. (1 Pet. 5:1,2) He says the responsibilities of elders are to shepherd and oversee the flock.

To enhance our understanding of this office in the church we add to the qualifications and definitions, examples of usage in the New Testament text. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every city in Acts 14:23. When they went to Jerusalem to meet with the other apostles over the dissimulation created by the commanding of circumcision to the Gentiles by the Jews, they also met with the elders. In Acts 20:17 Paul met with the elders of Ephesus whom he later described as bishops in the church. Titus was directed to appoint elders in every city. (Titus 1:5) In every case the reference to those who fulfill this office is in the plural. Nowhere in the New Testament text is there a reference to a church being overseen by one elder. Paul addressed the congregation at Philippi, Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Now notice one final characteristic of the responsibility of those holding this office. They are assigned a specific flock. The one among you. (1 Pet. 5:2) All the flock in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops. (Acts 20:28) Remember Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church. (Acts 14:23) Each church is to function autonomously under the guidance of those elders. Elders, bishops and pastors then, are to be plural in every church and their responsibility is limited to that church or flock which is among them.

"Houston, we have a problem." The religious world has ignored or misunderstood all of these principles of guidance offered in Scripture. These instructions were given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-13) at the command of the Lord Himself. (John 16:13) We see churches that have a single pastor. We see bishops who fail to meet the qualifications concerning family. These same bishops oversee more than one flock or congregation. The violations of Scripture go from the qualifications to the description of responsibility on through the examples of implementation in the New Testament church.

Now ask yourself this question. If God has made it simple enough for a person with average education to understand, why can those educated in the best Seminaries in the land not understand it? Why do they promulgate this error without shame?

Only two answers are available. One is the inability to understand and the other is a rejection of God's plan in favor of man's. I will let you decide.

Matt. 15:9 But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

## *"Fellowship" - As the Word is Used in the New Testament*

*Luther W. Martin*

Twelve different times in the King James Version, the word "fellowship" is taken from the Greek "koinonia," which according to Thayer's Lexicon, means: "1. The share which one has in anything, participation" ...'fellowship of the Spirit' (Phil. 2:1). 'The fellowship of his sufferings' (Phil. 3:10). 'The fellowship of ministering to the saints' (2 Cor. 8:4). 'To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery...' (Eph. 3:9). 'Ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord' (1 Cor. 1:9).

"2. Intercourse, fellowship, intimacy" 'they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship . . .' (Gal. 2:9). 'For what fellowship hath righteousness?' (2 Cor. 6:14.) 'They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, ...' (Acts 2:42). 'For your fellowship in the gospel from the very first...' (Phil. 1:5). 'That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3). 'if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...' (1 John 1:7). See also 1 John 1:16.

"3. A benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution...." See 2 Cor. 8:4 as referred to under No. 1 above. 2 Cor. 9:13 renders the word "liberal distribution." Heb. 13:16 uses the term "communicate."

The word "koinonia" is actually used some twenty times in the New Testament, but is translated "fellowship" only twelve times. In the other instances, it is translated "communion," four times; "communication," once; "contribution," once; "distribution," once; and by an inexact translation, according to Thayer, is rendered "to communicate," one time.

Thus "KOINONIA" refers to our relationship with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, with one another ...but in each instance it is used in reference to the work and worship of the Lord. In no instance does the word refer to a gathering for entertainment or recreation.

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