

HOW GOD IDENTIFIES OTHERS (2 OF 3)

David Halbrook

On the sixth day of creation, God identified a certain creature as “Adam,” meaning “a human.” “Adam” identified both what type of creature he was (mankind versus animal kind), and it was a personal name.

In Genesis 17:5, God gave Abram the name “Abraham.” If Abraham decided instead to call himself Michael—would God have been pleased?

As they grew into a nation, God referred to Abraham’s descendants as the house of Jacob, the children of Israel, or Israel (Ex. 19:3, 10; Deut. 5:1). What if Israel decided to call themselves Canaanites or the children of Terah (Abraham’s father)?

In the New Testament, God calls saved people “disciples” and “Christians” (Acts 11:26). As a single group, sometimes He identifies them as the kingdom of Jesus (Col. 1:13). In smaller groups, He identifies them as churches of God or churches of Christ (2 Thess. 1:4; Rom. 16:16). By this, God identifies His people with the Savior, Jesus Christ, but today men create all kinds of new spiritual names absent from Scripture (Catholic, Protestant, Methodist, Pentecostal, etc). As Adam, Abraham, and Israel, Christians are content with what God has called them. Are you?

-- *Website Update:* For those who use the internet, occasionally visit our website and see if you or someone you know can use the content that is there. In addition to our weekly bulletins (update regularly), there are “Questions and Answers” submitted from the community, a general article telling people who we are, a few charts of recent sermons, and some articles in Spanish. If you have ideas or suggestions for additional useful content, mention it to me or submit it to the men for consideration at the next business meeting.

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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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A NOTABLE QUOTE

ON THE FREQUENCY OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

David Halbrook

John Wesley (Methodist): *"I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's Day."* (www.gbod.org/worship/thm-bygc.pdf).

John Wesley is largely responsible for the existence of the Methodist Church, of which there are now several variations (The United Methodist Church [UMC], Evangelical Methodist Church, Primitive Methodist Church in the U.S.A., African Methodist Episcopal Church). Though he is not the sole contributor of the various creeds which define the doctrines of these churches, Wesley’s teachings are foundational to their existence.

In 2004, Wesley’s words quoted above were included in a study of the Lord’s Supper which was adopted by the General Assembly of the UMC, recommending that “Holy Communion” be offered every week.¹ Within this study, under the section “The Basic Pattern of Worship: A Service of Word and Table,” Acts 20:7 is referenced followed by these comments: “The practice of the Christian church from its earliest years was weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper on the Lord’s Day.” They then cite two historical sources, both of which come from the second century (or earlier), affirming the same. Consider the implications of these Methodist statements and studies-

1. We should follow the *example* of the church of the New Testament. (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:42)

2. There is a pattern for worship. (2 Timothy 1:13; John 4:24)

3. The Lord’s Supper should be observed every first day of the week. (Acts 20:7)

4. The “early church” was not the Methodist church. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Romans 16:16)

5. By their own admission, the traditional practice of the Methodist church in the Lord's Supper has not matched the practice of the New Testament church.

Of course, these Methodist documents do not define truth, but the necessary conclusions of their study are interesting. If nothing else, this helps to answer the false accusation that these ideas originated with modern churches of Christ.

John Wesley and some modern Methodists understand God's command concerning the Lord's Supper. Does the church you attend follow the New Testament pattern in this, and other, areas? If you know these things, are you practicing what you have learned? "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. . ." (2 Corinthians 13:5, NKJV)

¹This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion" p19 adopted by the 2004 General Conference of the UMC

SALVATION BY GRACE, "NOT OF WORKS"

Ron Halbrook (Broadmoor Beacon, Mar. 8, 1976)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). If men could boast of perfection in life, they could demand "the reward" from God "not...of grace, but of debt" (Rom. 4:4). Since all have sinned, salvation is "not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Not all men are guilty of the same sins—a fact used by many people to delude themselves into thinking they are "not so bad." In other words, they are confident of a righteousness of their own making since they have never murdered anyone, or, on the positive side, because they have been industrious in providing for their family. But just one sin separates a man from God, and most men are honest enough to admit they have erred in one way or another (Is. 59:1-2). Truly, salvation must be "not by works of righteousness which we have done," or else it must be hopelessly beyond the reach of every responsible human being! (Tit. 3:5)

Think about it again: No One Can Present God A Life Perfect In Every Deed. Yet, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13). What a sobering thought, God will examine each deed! None of us will be exempt, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). God is perfect in holiness and justice. He will judge us all, judge all our deeds, and condemn every act of wrong. Sin, he will not tolerate.

Think about it again: God Will Not Accept the Deeds of Man-made Creeds, Doctrines, and Commandments. Christ himself said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," quoting the words of the Father

given through Isaiah (Matt. 15:1-20). Jesus referred to religious traditions, which came, not by God's command, but "from the heart" of man. On account of such practices, Jesus taught that many souls will be lost like weeds plucked up or like blind men falling over a precipice. Some men are very strict and pious about observing their traditions, delighting in a religion of "will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body" (Col. 2:16-23). Such rules and ceremonies have an appearance of religion, but will not be God's standard of judgment—they will rather be destroyed by God's judgment, with all who have practiced them.

Think about it again: God Will Not Accept the Deeds of the Old Law. At one time the Jews were commanded by God to keep the Law of Moses. That was temporary, "till the seed (Christ) should come" (Gal. 3:16-29). Now Moses' Law has been made "old" and taken "away" (Heb. 8:13; 10:9). Moses is not our lawgiver today; the law he gave will not be the standard of judgment. Turning back to that law implies leaving the only hope God prepared in Christ, and thus turning to a Christ-less system where a man would be lost forever the first time he made a mistake (Gal. 3:10).

If the deeds of a righteousness of our own making cannot save us, WHAT CAN? God offers a righteousness of His making, which can become our very own by His love, mercy, and grace. "...the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared...according to his mercy he saved us...being justified by his grace" (Tit. 3:3-7). Love seeks the good of another, even one who is "unlovable" and "unlovely." Mercy shows pity, tender concern. Grace gives freely, where there is not merit. Love, mercy, and grace, can save us where our own record of deeds will fail us.

"Who is like unto" God who brought Israel out of bondage by his own "mercy"? (Ex. 15:11-13). God opened the way for Israel to worship Him, "in the multitude of thy mercy." He taught men to plead His mercy in place of their sins: "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old...All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth..." He taught men to "sing of the mercies of the Lord forever," because "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Ps. 8:3-4; 25:6-11; 89:1; 103:17).

We receive God's love, mercy, and grace by obedient faith. His mercy is declared in the gospel of Christ, "For the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:16-17, 5). God makes men righteous by forgiving their sins through the blood of Christ. Men must obey from the heart the commands of the gospel, to reach the cleansing blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4, 17). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Then we must continue by obedient faith to work His will and not our own (Tit. 2:11f).