

A READER'S QUESTION ABOUT BAPTISM & THE THIEF

David Halbrook

After reading "Basics of Baptism" last week (now at WWW.QVCOC.COM), a reader called asking about the crucified thief saved by Jesus. The caller said "I just wondered where he had been baptized."

1. Many people today assume that the thief had never been baptized. Mark 1:5 says "And all the land of Judea... were all baptized..."--was the thief one of them? We cannot know, so it is vain to try to "prove a point" this way. I do not teach that baptism is essential "because the thief did it." Sadly, people today believe that baptism is not essential "because the thief didn't do it." That cannot be proved.

2. Jesus' death established the new covenant (Matthew 26:28). When the thief spoke with Jesus, the new covenant was **not yet given** because Jesus had not yet died. Last week's article was a study of baptism under the new covenant.

3. Did the thief believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead? Of course not (Jesus had not yet died). Since the thief was saved without this belief, are we saved that way? No, but this is how some people view baptism.

Mark 16:16 has not changed. We welcome your comments or questions.

-- *Editor's Note:* For 2011, our gospel meetings, SBS, and fair booths are completed. Do we feel content and proud or have these opened our eyes to the daily work that we must be doing among the lost people around us in our neighborhood, at work, in our home, etc? Keep teaching these people—and clip and use our *Arkansas Weekly* article if it can help. Someone has taught you—you are indebted to teach others!

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

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WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED

Terry Sanders (www.tuckermancocf.com/02_20_11.htm)

There is a concept among religious people that when one becomes a Christian (by whatever means are relative to whatever group) that temporal things will all become just dandy. It is believed that becoming a Christian will allow health problems to vanish. It is also believed that economic woes will be eliminated by becoming a Christian. Please keep in mind that some in the Lord's church also believe this to be the case. Though these concepts may be promoted and held to tenaciously, I do not understand either to be found in God's word. The truth is that when one becomes a Christian the temporal things in the world will remain the same. God has **NEVER** promised that life will become a "rose garden" because one becomes a Christian! One's **relationship** to temporal things may change, but the things themselves do not do so (Matt. 6:24-34; Phil. 3:7-8; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Now, has God promised anything to Christians? This is a fair question. If so, what has He promised?

God has promised that when one becomes a Christian, in the manner described in the New Testament, that one will receive salvation from sin (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16) and, in the end, eternal life (Matt. 25:46; Rom. 2:7; 6:23; 1 Peter 1:3-4). Friends, your bills will keep coming whether you are a Christian or not. Your poor health will likely remain whether you are a Christian or not. Of course, if some bills and poor health are because of sin, repentance might alleviate that somewhat, but not necessarily so. Even in that, God has not guaranteed any success.

There is a time and a place when the cares of temporal life cease. It is described in Revelation 21:4, "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." The time is after judgment and the place is in heaven. So, one should obey the gospel correctly expecting to receive relief from sin in this life and relief from the temporal things in the life to come.

CHALLENGES IN GROWTH

Phillip Stuckey

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Growth is a great blessing, whether we are talking about spiritual growth or growth in number. But we must be diligent if we want to continue to grow and enjoy the benefits of growth.

Some years ago a brother pointed out to me that with growth comes change; and with change comes new challenges. So often we grow accustomed to things being a certain way and resist anything that moves us out of our comfort zone. It is important to stand steadfast in matters of faith and doctrine, but in matters of expediency or liberty, this resistance to change can sometimes cause strife among brethren. This is one of the greatest challenges growing congregations must meet.

Pettiness can be a destructive force amongst brethren. We all know of our obligations to love one another and to look out for each other’s best interest and not our own (1 Corinthians 10:24). Yet sometimes, we allow our own desires to stop us from doing what we ought to do in regards to one another. There is a war raging within us between our spirit and our flesh. Paul notes in his letter to the Romans, his spirit longed to do the will of God, yet his flesh desired to do evil (Romans 7:21-23). And unfortunately, sometimes when we ought to be doing good, we allow the petty things of this world and our own wants and desires to cloud our judgment, and find Satan hindering us at just the moment we should be charging ahead!

Paul writes in 1st Thessalonians that Satan put obstacles in his path (1 Thessalonians 2:18). The same is true for you and I today, So as we grow, we must not forget the “big picture” and be overcome by pettiness or personal differences, but

rather, remember our mission as Christians and our responsibilities to one another (Philippians 2:1-5).

If we keep our focus on the things that matter as Christians, such as edifying one another (Ephesians 4:11-12), taking the Gospel to the lost (2 Timothy 2:2), and benevolence for fellow saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), the petty concerns of this world should be easier to overcome. We must always seek the best for each other as the Lord commanded and that fervently (1 Peter 1:22).

We have much to be thankful for. Let us continue to do good toward one another and build the relationships with each other that will help us to live in harmony in Christ (Philippians 2:2) and do the work the Lord has called us to do!

What Will I Do With What I Learned From Our Gospel Meeting?

- *“A sower went out to sow his seed...” (Lk. 8:5)*
- *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves...But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” (Jam. 1:22, 25)*
- *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)*
- *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” (Jam. 4:17)*
- *“But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46)*
- *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” (Is. 6:8)*
- *“For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth,... in every place...” (1 Thess. 1:8)*
- *“... be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity... Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Tim. 4:12, 16)*
- *“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” (Col. 4:5)*