

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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WHAT MUST WE UNDERSTAND?

by Owen D. Olbricht

“What must we understand to be saved?” is a question that arises when children ask to be baptized and also when adults seek to understand baptism. How much do they need to know? We should seek to understand all that God requires we understand. Seemingly we need to know all the Bible records the lost were told to do in order to be saved.

Jesus quoted Isaiah’s statement that people had closed their seeing, hearing, and understanding lest they return and be forgiven (Mark 4:12). This is a clear indication that understanding is necessary.

WHAT DID THE EUNUCH UNDERSTAND?

Some have confidently asserted that understanding that Jesus is the Christ is all that is necessary, basing this conclusion on the Ethiopian eunuch’s confession. Is this all he knew and all he was expected to understand? What had Philip taught him? He preached Christ to the eunuch from the Isaiah passage he was reading:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth; in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is, taken from the earth” (Acts 8:32, 33).

What would Philip have taught about Jesus’ life being “taken from the earth”? Would he discuss this passage without speaking about how the Jesus’ death forgives sins, or without telling what Jesus requires one to do in order to be forgiven?

Philip would have been familiar with Peter’s teaching for he had been with Peter in Jerusalem before the dispersion because of persecution (Acts 8: 1-5). Surely he would have taught what Peter

taught on the day of Pentecost, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2: 38).

This would have been why the eunuch asked what prevented his being baptized. Philip would have known from this question that the eunuch understood that he was a sinner in need of salvation through the blood of Jesus and that he associated his being saved with his being baptized.

His requesting baptism was a clue to Philip that the eunuch understood what he needed to do to be saved. He now needed to know if he was convinced that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God. The eunuch’s confession of that fact let Philip know that the eunuch would trust in Jesus to forgive his sins when he was baptized and that he would accept Jesus as the king in whose kingdom he would serve. This is what Philip needed to know, and based on this knowledge he baptized the eunuch.

We know that when Philip preached he also included the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus because this is what Philip preached when he preached Christ (Acts 8:5, 12). Therefore, the eunuch would also have understood he was entering the kingdom, the church, when he was baptized (John 3: 3-5).

ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

What did the Jews on the day of Pentecost understand? They must have understood that Jesus is Lord and Christ for Peter’s drawing this conclusion pricked their hearts (Acts 2: 36, 37). Is this all they understood?

They asked the question, “What shall we do?” From Peter’s answer

we can conclude that they were asking what to do to be forgiven of their sins (Acts 2: 38). Luke does not record all Peter told them but he did include that he said, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2: 39, 40). Their response shows that they understood that by being baptized they would be forgiven and saved from the punishment coming on that generation, for they who received his word were baptized (Acts 2: 41).

They understood they were sinners, that Jesus who is the Lord and Christ, the Son of God, could forgive their sins when they were baptized. They would have realized that Jesus is the Lord in whose kingdom they would serve.

UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL

In order to be saved we must believe the gospel (Romans 1: 16). We cannot believe the gospel unless we understand it. Those who go into all the world are to preach the gospel (Mark 16: 15). Philip was obeying Jesus when he preached Christ to the eunuch, which must mean that by preaching Christ he was preaching the gospel. After preaching to the eunuch, Philip “preached the gospel,” *euangelizo*, from Azotus to Caesarea (Acts 8: 40, ASV). Evidently he continued to preach what he preached to the eunuch.

Some have muddied the issue by stating that one cannot understand the whole Bible, therefore complete understanding is not necessary. We can learn much after we are saved that we do not need to know in order to be saved.

The gospel is to be believed (Romans 1: 16). The gospel includes the fact that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and raised (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4). As the Christ, our deliverer, He will save us if we will believe in Him and confess Him as our Lord and Savior, which we are to express in our turning our back to a wicked

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world and by our being buried with Him in baptism so that our sins will be forgiven and in order to begin a new life in the kingdom of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The simple truth concerning forgiveness through Jesus' blood and a commitment to leave an old life in order to live for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a member of His kingdom that is expressed in baptism for the forgiveness of sins does not take hours to teach. Answering all modern day objections might take hours, but an understandable presentation of the simple basics of salvation can be given in a short period of time. An understanding of the truth concerning salvation in Jesus and submission to Him as a citizen in His kingdom, the church, is all we need to understand in order to be saved from our past sins.

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CORRECTION: We also regret that an error was made in assigning the author's name to the article in the February 2000 issue entitled, "What If?" The author of the article was W.A. Brewer, not Wayne Brewer. These good brethren are related but not the same person.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU REFUSE TO SEEK WISDOM?

by Jerry Moffitt

Lady Wisdom said, "Because I have called and you have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, (25) Because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof, (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, (27) When your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you" (Pro. 1: 24-27).

There are consequences for not listening. The king said, "He who disdains instruction despises his own soul. But he who heeds reproof gets understanding" (Pro. 15:31). How many are the slain, though they had been warned? And yet, what does it really cost to listen? The English say, "From hearing comes wisdom; from speaking, repentance." And, the Germans warn "He that won't listen, must feel." If it is foolish not to listen, is it not almost criminal to **disdain** counsel? The King James Version has "set at nought." It can mean "to loosen" but came more to mean "dismiss," "avoid", or "refuse." Often a petitioner to a great person seems so insignificant he cannot even make an appointment. So the fool disdains the counsel of wisdom. To the fool, wisdom is a dry crust rather than sweet whipped cream, and they would rather die from an infected wound than dress it, if the antiseptic might hurt. Good advice often carries discomfort or a little pain. Advice may rob one of fun if it is to save the life. But you may as well "try to get butter out of a dog's mouth" as separate a fool from fun and folly. "Cheap advice is better than dear repentance," but when the deed is done, advice comes too late. So wisdom laughs and mocks at the calamity of her arrogant despisers. It is the laughter of responsibility toward pretenders, light toward darkness, the venerable toward outrageous taunters. It is the educated and

instructive laugh of one abused and insulted for trying to help. It is a promise of laughter and mockery foretold not with relish but as a warning, to hurt in order to help.

So, in Proverbs 1:27 we find not the laughter of a successful plot, not of guile, but laughter to warn with such words as "terror," "storm," "destruction," "whirlwind," "distress," and "anguish."

In Proverbs 1:28 Wisdom says she won't answer the belated cry. There is a time when it is too late: "If the serpent bite before it is charmed then is there no advantage in the charmer" (Ecc. 10:11). "It is too late to cover the well when the child is drowned" (German). "It is no time to duck thy head once the neck is severed" (Scottish).

Friends, too, there is no gospel of the second chance on the day one enters Hades. So, "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

I sincerely believe there are many good and gentle folk who live quiet lives of ungodliness. They are not pious, and they are completely inattentive to God. They may not kill, rob, steal, curse, or commit adultery. But they disobey the greatest commandment in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Mat. 22:37).

So in Proverbs 1:30 Sister Wisdom says, they "**Would have none of my counsel:**" and they "**despised all my reproof.**" Why would they do that? We learn, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Pro. 12:15). They are wild and animal-like just as "he that hateth reproof is brutish" (Pro. 12:16). Again we learn, "A scoffer loveth not to be reproved; he will not go unto the wise" (Pro. 15:12). The African said, "Not to know is bad. Not to wish to know is worse." Oh, let us read the Bible.

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THE CHURCH

Bible Lesson Number Seven

by Richard England, Sr.

"Church" is a word with which all Bible readers are familiar. The Greek word translated "church" is also translated "assembly." It refers to an assembly of people who have been "called out" or "called together" for some specific purpose. In **Acts 19:32** it refers to those who had gathered to protest Paul's preaching. Stephen, speaking of the people who had been called out of Egypt, calls them "the church in the wilderness" (**Acts 7:38**). Paul uses the term with reference to a religious assembly (**1 Corinthians 14:34**).

In that Jesus came to "call . . . sinners unto repentance" (**Luke 5:32**) and those who have accepted him have been "called . . . out of darkness into his marvelous light" (**1 Peter 2:9**), the most fitting word to use to designate them is "church", the called out. Jesus used the word in speaking of all who would believe on him when he said of Peter's confession: ". . . upon this rock I will build my church . . ." (**Matthew 16:18**).

Those who are in Christ are "the called." A number of New Testament passages show this to be true. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (**Ephesians 4:1**). "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (**Colossians 3:15**). "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" (**James 2:7**) Christians are those who are "partakers of the heavenly calling" (**Hebrews 3:1**). They are called by the gospel (**2 Thessalonians 2:14**).

All who obey the gospel's call by being baptized into Christ are "children of God by faith" (**Galatians 3:26,27**). They have been called out of sin and into Jesus Christ. They are the called out, the "church" for which he died (**Ephesians 5:23-27**), which is his body (**Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18,24**), and which he has sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word" (**Ephesians 5:26**).

Jesus has all authority (**Matthew 28:18**). Only Jesus can say what one must do to get into his church, his body. When we do what he says in order to get into him, he adds us to that great body of saints who have also submitted to his will. No man on the face of the earth has the power to vote us in or out of the church of Christ. They may keep us out of human institutions, but not the divine church of God which is mentioned in the Bible. If one is saved, he is saved by the power of God through obedience to the gospel. To say that he is saved is to say that he has been called out of sin and into Christ. He is in the Lord's church.

God has added his people together in this fashion from the day of Pentecost until now (**Acts 2:47**). If we do what they did, then we will become what they became. We should want to continue in the same fashion of worship and work for the Lord that was characteristic of them. Thus, we can look forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ with great hope.

When the church at Corinth became divided over doctrine and practice, Paul said they were "carnal" (**1 Corinthians 3:3,4**). He said they should all be united. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (**1 Corinthians 1:10**). Jesus prayed: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their works; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (**John 17:20-21**). Division among those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ is sinful.

One of the things over which the church at Corinth was divided was the name they wore and to whom they said they belonged (**1 Corinthians 1:10-12**). The test of ownership and the name to wear is simple. Who was crucified for us? In whose name were we baptized? We do not belong to one who was not crucified for us nor do we

belong to him unless we have been baptized in his name. Those for whom Christ died and who have been baptized in his name for the remission of sins are in his body, the church (**Acts 2:38-47**).

The New Testament says there is only one body (**Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; Ephesians 4:4**). To be in that one body is to be saved and in the church; to be out of that one body is to be without help.

*"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (**Ephesians 2:12-16**).*

Questions

1. Why is the work "church" used to refer to God's people?
2. Out of what have God's people been called?
3. How do we answer the call?
4. How do we become members of the church?
5. Whose church is it?
6. Are all saved people in the church?
7. How many churches does Jesus have?

[Editors note: We regret that Richard England's name was omitted from his last Bible Lesson.]

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Apology: We extend a sincere apology to sister Dorinda Moore, who is the author of a poem we used in the October 1999 issue of FGGN. The poem was not named nor its author known when we printed it. We have since learned the poem is titled, "The Rose," and the author is sister Moore.

LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE

The church of Christ in your area has a number of **free** Bible Study services to offer you. If you have a desire to study the Scriptures to come to an understanding of God's will for you, or to make certain that you know what to do to be saved and remain saved, we will be delighted to sit down with you in your own home and study the Bible with you. If you would like to study through a Bible Correspondence Course, we will gladly lead you through such a course by mail. If you desire a Bible tract on a particular subject, we will do our best to locate material on the subject you request and get that to you. If you have questions about any of the articles that appear in **Fulton County Gospel News** or any other Bible topic, we will do our best to give you an answer from the Bible. Of course, there are no charges for any of these services offered by churches of Christ.

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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