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How You May Join Our Church

By Ernest Loomis

HOW YOU MAY JOIN OUR CHURCH . . . This was a statement I read some time ago in a church bulletin, followed by four ways to join: 1. You may join our church upon public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and baptism. 2. You may join our church on promise of letter of transference from another - - - church of like faith. 3. You may join our church upon your statement of conversion and your baptism by a - - - church of like faith if for some reason a letter of transference is unavailable. 4. You may join our church upon your statement of conversion and baptism into our church if you are a member of another denomination.

I have searched the scriptures through and read every example of conversion in the New Testament and have found little resemblance in the above instructions and those found in the Bible. In fact, I found no place to indicate that man has a church; however I did find where Jesus said, "I will build MY church" (Matt. 16:18). Neither did I find any place where it was suggested that one could "join" the church the Lord promised to build, however I did find where it said ". . . the Lord ADDED to the church such as should be saved, (or those that were saved ASV) (Acts 2:47); and in (Mark 16:16) Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..". Looking further at the commission Jesus gave His apostles; in (Matt. 28:19) Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:". Then in (Luke 24:46-47) He said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem". In view then of these scriptures, the concern should be, **HOW YOU MAY BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH THE LORD BUILT?**

In answer to the above question, surely we can depend upon divinely authorized examples, so will you consider with me some examples of conversions found in the book of Acts? First let's look at (Acts 2:). The Spirit guided apostle Peter convinced a number of Jews that they were guilty of crucifying the Son of God and when asked what to do he said, "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" (Acts 2:38). Philip preached Christ to the Ethiopian and when they came to a certain water he said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Upon this confession the chariot was stopped and Philip baptized him (Acts 8:35-38). As Saul of Tarsus traveled to Damascus the Lord met him and talked with him. When Saul was convinced he had been persecuting Christ he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Did the Lord tell him there was nothing for him to do, or that he had already done all that was necessary and was saved? He said, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou MUST do (Acts 9:1-6). Ananias, being sent by God told him to arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins (Acts 22:16). Cornelius was told to send to Joppa for Peter who would tell him words whereby he and his house would be saved (Acts 11:13-14). How then does one become a member of the Lord's church? By hearing the gospel of Christ, believing that gospel, repenting of all sins, confessing Jesus as the Son of God and being baptized (buried in water) for the remission of sins. The Lord has provided no other way so **IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHAT YOU BELIEVE AND OBEY!!!** For further study on this or any Bible subject, contact:

P.O. Box 452
Seymour, MO 65746

Fishers of Men, or Keepers of the Aquarium?

By Eddy Gilpin

Matthew 4:19 records where our Lord extended an invitation and made a promise to two of His would-be disciples, Peter and Andrew. He invited them to "Follow me" and promised to make them "fishers of men". As fishing was their occupation, He used an analogy that was crystal clear to them. Their task would become even more obvious in the days ahead.

Although Jesus was not speaking directly to anyone living today, the principle of being "fishers of men" is encompassed in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19,20). Thus, all who are Christians must be "about their Father's business". The conversion of the world has been left in the hands of those who are already members of the church of Christ. Therefore, we must be "fishers of men".

In considering the foregoing while simultaneously surveying the condition of the Lord's church and the cause of Christianity in and upon the world, one wonders why the body of Christ is declining without and decaying within. Could it be that God's plan is not working? Or, is it more the case that God's plan is not BEING worked? Thus, the question is posed - "Are we fishers of men, or merely keepers of the aquarium?"

The commission given by our Lord to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things. . ." (Mt. 28:19,20) is the divine pattern for the spreading of the gospel. Christians (all Christians) are to teach and baptize others. They are also to teach these new converts to teach and baptize others. Thus, the genius of this divine plan can be seen. However, when children of God are content to sit passively and comfortably while a lost and dying world passes unwarned into eternity (Ezek. 3:17-19), the brilliance of this Messianic method passes by unheralded.

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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Fishers of Men . . .

(continued from page one)

Too often the church as a whole is too anxious to cast in its lot with the "noise, nickels, and numbers" association. Elaborate facilities are erected, maintained, and showcased with a conscience-easing mental message that says to the community "Come to us and we will teach you". Although buildings are an expedient and perfectly scriptural to have, all too often they become the centers of our evangelistic efforts. We become so involved in "keeping the aquarium" that we neglect the "fishing of men".

The divine precept of seeking and saving the lost has, in many cases, been replaced with the idea that the bigger and better the facilities, the more "drawing power" a group has. The Bible reveals that the gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16), His word is the drawing force (Jn. 6:44, 2 Thes. 2:14), and each individual Christian has a responsibility of going to the lost with the soul saving message (Mk. 16:15,16). Jesus has said that we must be "fishers of men" and not mere keepers of the aquarium. His way will save us from much heartache, failure, and despair and will insure the purity of New Testament Christianity for generations yet to come.



Try as you may, there is nothing that can bring you contentment of soul but the consciousness of a life acceptable to the Lord. To the citizen of God's kingdom, righteousness precedes peace and joy. (Rom. 14:17.)

Obedience to God

By Burl Curtis

God has always required obedience. His laws have changed but this has not. To obey Adam and Eve had to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," to dress and keep the garden, and to avoid eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 1:28; 2:15-17.) Their disobedience and man's continued practice of it has resulted in all the sin, shame, and misery that is in the world today. Noah and his family were required to build an ark for the salvation of his house. Their obedience not only saved them but made Noah the father of today's human race.

When Saul disobeyed God's commandment to "go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have," the Lord revealed through Samuel that to obey is better than sacrifice (part of their public worship), "and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. 15:3, 22.) In Isaiah chapter one, the Lord said his people had rebelled against him and were a sinful nation. (vs. 2,4.) In verse 11 he asked this question, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" He continued, "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats." Had not God commanded these things? YES!! But such worship pleased him only when it came from those who loved and obeyed him. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15.) God continued in the book of Isaiah, "Bring no more vain oblations." (Their offerings were meaningless because of their disobedience.) "Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations -- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers. I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isa. 1:13-20 NIV.)

God requires this same kind of obedience today. Vengeance will be taken "on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1:8.) "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." (John 9:31.) Worship is not enough. We must do his will. God's Son is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:9.)

It should be clear that obedience to God today requires that a person obey the first principles before he is accepted in other things. It is the will of God that each accountable person hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. If a person refuses or neglects to do these things, then prayers, public and private worship, sacrificial giving, and many good deeds will not save his soul and will not meet God's requirement for obedience. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 21.) Also, if a person has become a Christian but is not living a faithful, dedicated life, he is not meeting God's demands for obedience. ". . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10.)

**CRITICS AND CRITICISM**

So often the chronic critic is not the best qualified to offer criticism. Jesus vehemently assailed the mote-hunter with the beam in his own eye. The poet Shelly, very caustically affirmed that the literature critic was one who had made a failure at writing. Sometimes men who are frustrated in their ambition to be elders are the bitterest critics of elders, those who know nothing about the mechanics of preaching freely criticize preachers, and those whose morals are shameful criticize Christians.

For a friend who loves us to point out a mistake that we may be better is the kindest sort of favor. Even when others criticize us through selfishness and envy, this should remind us that we are human and fallible and should cause us to take fresh stock of ourselves that we may do better still.

(Via West Side, Corsicana, Texas)

Simplicity of the Word

By Shawn D. Mathis

INTRODUCTION

Creeds, creeds, creeds!! Everybody wants to have their own doctrinal way of practicing religion. "It is my life, my religion and I'll do it the way I please, besides I cannot understand the Bible anyway." Often we hear and see people proclaiming that they have the right to do what they want in religion. The philosophy seems to be that "God is a loving God and it really does not matter how we serve him as long as we try to serve him." What is the mistake in this kind of thinking? Is there a mistake in this kind of thinking? Does it matter to God what I do in service to him?

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE WORD VS. THE CREED BOOK

Denominations teach that it is impossible to understand the Bible without some creed to use with it. Many sincere people are taught that they will not be able to understand the Bible; therefore, there is no reason for them to study it. Their minds are filled with the poison that the only way one can understand the Bible is with a creed book to make it clear.

The Bible has something to say about such teachers. The Bible teaches that "... evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13.) In 2 Timothy 4:3,4 we read: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Yes, my friend, we can understand the Bible. We should not and cannot rely on the preacher for all of our teaching. We can never be deceived into believing that we cannot understand the Bible. We are to be encouraged to study the Bible to properly understand our walk through this life. (2 Timothy 2:15.)

THE SCRIPTURES MAY BE LEARNED BY A CHILD

We are told that the Bible is too deep and difficult for us to comprehend without the aid of a creed. This is contrary to the word of God which plainly teaches us that the scriptures may be learned by a child. Denominations say that one cannot understand the Bible without a creed. Did Timothy need a creed? Did Paul tell Tim-

othy to continue in the things that he learned from the Bible and the creed book? No. Paul told Timothy to "... continue in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of . . . and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to (what? confuse you - No!) make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:14, 15.) Why do denominations swat in the air trying to find a place for the creed book? It simply is not there. There is no place for it. The Bible is as plain as anyone could ever ask for it to be. Why make the word of God harder than it has to be? The Bible is our guideline to eternity. Study it - not a creed book.

THE SCRIPTURES WILL MAKE THEE WISE UNTO SALVATION

The Bible teaches that the holy scriptures will make thee wise unto salvation. "But where is my creed book? I cannot understand the Bible without my creed book. It is too hard for me to understand." The holy scriptures "... are able to make thee wise unto salvation. . . ." How will the scriptures make you wise? Through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Why should we study the Bible? How do we know we should learn from and can depend on the scriptures? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. . . ." How many creed books do you know of that are inspired of God? Man says we need our creed books for doctrine. We have been told to go to our creed books for these things. We need our creed books for the truth. We need the creed so we can be complete. No, my friend, all we need is the Bible which is the word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 says: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

CONCLUSION

What will you do? What will you say? Where will you turn? What is it going to be when you stand before God and plead your lost case for the creeds of man? The Bible teaches us that we are to "Prove what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Ephesians 5:10, 11.) Make your choice wisely. Follow the path that walks as close to the word of God as possible. Remember to "search the scriptures." (John 5:39.) "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.)

Bible Questions & Answers

By Steve Williams

Question: What is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 3:13-17, especially the burning up of a man's work?

"If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved" (1 Cor. 3:14-15).

Paul refers to the work of building on a foundation. Paul himself was such a builder which he did by preaching the gospel (1 Cor. 3:10). Paul laid a foundation by his preaching. What this means is that Paul usually preached where others had not gone with the gospel, as was the case in Corinth (Rom. 15:20). Christ was the perfect foundation for the church by laying down his life for our sins (1 Cor. 3:11; 2:1-2). On top of that foundation of Paul's original work, others had worked in Corinth. Time, and the final judgment day, would reveal what type of additions had been made to the structure whose foundation was Christ (1 Cor. 3:13). Was their work like gold, silver, or precious stones which can survive a fire, or was it in the nature of wood, hay, or stubble which burns easily (1 Cor. 3:12)? That is, had they converted people and matured them in the faith with sound doctrine or had false teaching or preacheritis crept in (1 Cor. 1:10-17)?

In the text above "work" refers to the work of a Christian in adding to the foundation of Christ, that is, to the people we have brought to the Lord through evangelism and mature through our teaching. If these people stay saved, we will rejoice on the judgment day (1 Cor. 3:14; cf. 1 Thes. 2:19-20; Phil 4:1; 2 Cor. 1:14). If the people we convert fall away in apostasy, they lose their souls and we lose any reward for converting and teaching them, but as their teacher we are still saved if we remain faithful to Christ (1 Cor. 3:15; 2 Jn. 8). This passage encourages all teachers of God's word to be mindful of their teaching. It is a serious task.



It isn't the mountain ahead that wears you out - it's the grain of sand in your shoe. Be master of your petty annoyances and conserve your energies for the big worthwhile things.

There is a love that is wicked and a hatred that is righteousness. There is a love that is righteous and a hatred that is wicked. All depends on what we love and what we hate. Like the Lord, let us love all people and hate all sins.



It isn't the amount of knowledge but the kind that is worth while. Not quantity, but quality.

Purity consists not in the absence of temptations, but in conquering them.

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2: 11, 12; Revelation 2:10).



Mail all address changes to:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
P.O. BOX 251
MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554