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Was the Thief on the Cross Saved?

By Jared Williams

The account of the thief dying on the cross is one of great interest. In our study of the thief we want to consider two things. First, was he baptized? Secondly, is he an example for us today? I will not give you my opinion on this matter, for we all have opinions and your opinion is as good as mine. I am sure that human thoughts and opinions are responsible for so many honest souls going contrary to heaven's will. Since this is a Biblical subject we should be willing to let God's word answer these questions and gladly accept what God has to say.

1. The account of the thief dying with Christ was a matter of prophecy. Isaiah announced that He would be numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). We read, "And there were also two other, malefactors, let with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. The said Jesus, Father forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:32-43). It is understood that the thief will be saved, for Jesus

said, "today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Many feel that since Jesus made this statement to the thief and said nothing about baptism that the thief was not baptized, therefore, no one must be baptized to be saved.

Was the thief baptized? To those who feel that the thief was not baptized I ask, how do you know he was not baptized? Where is the passage(s) of scripture(s) that teach he was not baptized? Do you think that because he was a thief he wasn't baptized? Sometimes we assume too much and in this case you are assuming absolutely too much if you feel that the thief wasn't baptized. The truth is no one can prove that the thief was not baptized. It is probable that the thief was baptized. We read, "and the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:3-6). The thief lived where John did his word - baptizing hundreds. No one can prove that the thief was not among this great host.

2. Is the thief an example for us today? Do you realize that the thief lived under the Old Testament law? No one can be saved like the thief today, for he lived under the old covenant, and we are living under the new covenant, which became effective after the death of Christ. Christ hadn't died at the time of the thief, and the New Testament did not become effective until he did die (Hebrews 9:15-17). The thief was not subject to the same law that we are. We live in New Testament times and if we are saved at all we MUST comply with the conditions of salvation set forth in the New Will.

There is no way around it. You must come out from behind the thief and obey the Lord. Hear Christ, "and Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go

ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20). Can you be saved without being baptized? Jesus said NO. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

We read of Paul's conversion, "and now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Your sins are washed away when you obey the Lord.

Will you give up excuses, and stop trying to go around the word of the Lord? The Savior is interested in you, He desires that all would be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

Things That Miracles Have Never Done

By Clifford Dixon

When we speak of a miracle we speak of an act of God above the laws of nature, or contrary to the laws of nature. Things that some men call miracles are nothing more than unusual things happening in harmony with the laws of nature. Many things have been attributed to the miraculous that do not rightfully belong there. We believe that the parting of the Red Sea was a miracle when Israel passed through. We also believe the other miracles revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Jesus really raised Lazarus from the dead and even his critics admitted this miracle (John 11).

1. Conversion to Christ has never been done by a miracle. Jesus said a man had to be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). This the Lord interpreted when he told the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. (Mk. 16:15,16). The Holy Spirit's part in the new birth was through the word he revealed. Man's part is to receive that word and act upon it. When this is done there is created in us a new heart by the change

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MIRACLES. . . .

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of understanding, the change of the emotions, and the change of the will. Check up on the conversions in the book of Acts and you will find that this was always the case in every conversion. Miracles were done to show the authenticity of the word of God but the conversion came about when men believed that word, repented of their sins, and were baptized into Christ.

2. No man was qualified to preach the gospel as the result of a miracle. To preach the gospel one had to first be a Christian, then be faithful to the Lord, and prepare himself to carry this gospel to others. Timothy is a good example of this. He was Paul's own son in the faith (I Timothy 1:2). He had been taught the gospel by the apostle. He also was a faithful Christian in the congregation for a period of time before Paul took him on his missionary tours. He was "a certain disciple" of Lystra and Derbe, "Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." (Acts 16:1,2). He was a sincere believer as can be seen in 2 Timothy 1:5. He was also well versed in the Old Testament scriptures because Paul declared him to have known the holy scriptures from a child. (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul then circumcised him and took him with him in his work (Acts 16:3). When Timothy was left at Ephesus Paul instructed him as to encouraging others to preach the gospel. He said, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2).

3. No man was ever qualified to be an elder of the church by a miracle. A great deal of effort and preparation is necessary on the part of a Christian man to be qualified for the eldership. "A

bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and snare of the devil." (I Tim. 3:2-7). It is said in Acts 20:28 that the Holy Ghost made those men overseers of the church, but the way He did this is by instructing them in qualifying themselves and in their duties of oversight.

4. No man was ever made to be faithful to the Lord by a miracle. No man spoke with more tongues, nor prophesied more, nor did more miracles than the Apostle Paul, but he still had to be faithful to Christ by individual effort. He said, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (I Cor. 9:24-27). He had to personally practice the principles he taught by inspiration in order to be saved. Everyone of us must set our affections on things above, put off sinful practices, put on good practices, and be faithful as Christians or we will not reach heaven. (Col. 3:1 - 17).

CONTRIBUTIONS**Congregations**

Agnos Church of Christ	15.00
Garfield Church of Christ	25.00
Church of Christ (Elizabeth, AR)	10.00
Gamaliel Church of Christ	10.00
Pilot Church of Christ	20.00
Church of Christ (Marionville, MO)	10.00
Clarkridge Church of Christ	25.00
Jeff Church of Christ	10.00

Individuals

Eathel Bray (Bray, AR)	5.00
John & Lena Scher (Cedar Hill, MO)	10.00
Wendell Stobaugh (Little Rock, AR)	5.00

Obedience Unto The End

By Johnie Scaggs, Jr.

To some people words such as obedience, laws, rules, etc., are expressions which they really wish were not spoken or mentioned in any form. The reason for this attitude is mainly because they do not desire to change or conform their lives to any type of obedience.

However, one should realize that it is only by being obedient unto Jesus Christ that one will ever see God in all of His glory.

Jesus was obedient, "Through he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8,9). Furthermore His obedience was unto the end. According to John 10:18, the very act of giving His life on the cross was an act of obedience unto the Father. It was because of His obedience that He was made perfect and became the author of ETERNAL salvation unto all them that OBEY Him. According to Peter Christ was our example, I Peter 2:21. Therefore, we should follow in his foot steps as to our obedience.

Obedience is more than a one time act, although this is included. It is more of an attitude as to the way one will look on life. When a person is truly converted to Christ and His cause he will submit his life over to the Lord. Thus he will forget what he would desire to do and want to do that which the Lord would enjoin upon him, thereby being obedient unto Him. But this is something which must continue throughout his life unto the very end. If one is not obedient unto the end, then his life is for nothing and all which he may have done in the past has been done in vain. Demas is a good example of this, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, . . ." (II Tim. 4:10a). All of the good which Demas had done in the past, was now in vain. He had a good start but a very bad end. And the same is true with people today if they do not endure and be obedient unto the end then Christ cannot be the author of their eternal salvation. 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. 7:21).

Remember, it is only through obedience that one shall ever see God in all of His glory.

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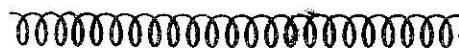
HAVE YOU CONSIDERED
THESE FACTS LATELY?

- Glynn Purdy

Developing Churches and Leaders

I certainly do not have all the answers but here's a suggestion. **TEACH INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.** One of the greatest responsibilities teachers and preachers have is to teach members to shoulder their individual responsibility in the local church. Jesus expects each local congregation to grow and to develop properly. This can only be accomplished "if" and "when" the members decide to grow into the likeness of Christ -- accepting their obligations and responsibilities as Christians.

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SIMPLICITY VS. CONFUSION

In religion we have an amazing contrast between God's simplicity and man's confusion. God's way is so simple. It is man who has complicated things. Let's look at God's simple plan for all mankind:

I. ONE WORLD - ONE SAVIOR

We cannot come to the Father by anyone else (John 14:6). He is the world's only mediator (I Tim. 2:5). God is no respecter of persons. He has given this world just one Savior. That's all there is; that's all we need.

II. ONE WORLD - ONE PLAN OF SALVATION

If saved at all we are all saved the same way. We must all believe in Christ (Mark 16:16). All must repent (Acts 17:30), confess (Matt. 10:32) and be baptized (Matt. 28:19). All the saved must remain faithful to the Lord (Rev. 2:10). This is the only plan of salvation there is.

III. ONE WORLD - ONE CHURCH

God planned (Eph. 3:10,11) and Jesus built one church (Matt. 16:18). It was bought with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28). All the saved are added to it (Acts 2:47). For all the world God provided just ONE church.

IV. ONE WORLD - ONE BOOK

To guide the saved God gave one book, the Bible. It's the only book He has ever given to man. It is sufficient (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The whole world will be judged by it (Rev. 20:11 - 15).

V. ONE WORLD - ONE GLORIOUS HOPE

The faithful saints have the blessed hope of heaven. They are truly headed for the same place. If they accept the one savior, obey the one plan of salvation, worship and serve God in the one church, follow the teachings of the one book, they will live together eternally in heaven.

Man has added confusion to that which is so simple. Can't you see how much better God's way is? We plead with you to return with us to the simplicity of God's one way for all the world.

Bill Richardson

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).



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