



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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Reply to Questions from the Internet

By
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“Hello my name is _____ and I have some questions about The Church of Christ. I have attached them as Microsoft Word document. I am in the process of studying The Church of Christ and would like any additional information that you can give me. I appreciate your time in answering these questions.”

“_____, I am very busy at the present time. I will answer your questions. My first suggestion is that you might be better off studying the Bible rather than churches of Christ. From your questions, I know you have been greatly misled as to the teaching of the Bible on a number of items you mentioned. I plan to answer them and send them to you. I also plan to use your questions and answer them for the publication from the school. I am sure that students in Theological Schools get a good dose of the skepticism you have expressed. I will not use your name in the published material. I hope you will study your Bible and take it seriously. Sincerely, Mr. Stearsman”

In answering the questions sent me, I have placed them in brackets [ANSWER: ...]. This should enable the readers to distinguish the questions from my response. JMS

Questions about The Church of Christ

1. How many types of sinners are there? If there is more than one type of sinner where does the Bible make this distinction? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that it is the case that all sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Eph. 2:1-3), there is sin that is classified as transgressing the laws of God (I John 3:4), there is sin that is classified as failing to do what we know to do (James 4:17), and there are sins that will bring a greater degree of punishment from God—falling from grace (leaving faithfulness to Christ) is an example (II Peter 2:20-22).]

2. Can you find the complete plan of salvation in any one verse in The Bible? If not why? [ANSWER: No, the Bible teaches that you can not find the complete plan of

salvation in one verse of the Bible any more than you can find all about Jesus, God, the Devil, etc. in one verse of the Bible. Why? Because the whole of anything is the sum of its parts. Until you understand and give proper consideration to what the Bible has to say on a given subject you do not understand the subject under deliberation.]

3. Mark 16:16 says “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” Is it possible to believe without being baptized? What damns a person? [ANSWER: Yes, the Bible teaches that it is possible to believe without being baptized. The demons do (James 2:19), and some rulers of the Jews believed in Jesus but would not confess it (John 12:42-43). The Bible teaches that sin damns a person. When we refuse to obey God, we stand condemned—see answer provided in number 1.]

4. Explain the difference between water baptism and Holy Spirit Baptism. [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that Holy Spirit baptism is administered by Christ, and only two cases of it are recorded in the Bible. The day of Pentecost when the Apostles received it (Acts 2), and the household of Cornelius when Gentiles were shown to be worthy subjects of the gospel (Acts 10-11). The Bible teaches that water baptism is administered by men (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 22:16).]

5. When does one receive the Holy Spirit? When is a person baptized by the Holy Spirit? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that the Christian receives the Holy Spirit when he is scripturally baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Gal. 4:6). Individuals are not baptized in the Holy Spirit—see answer number 4.]

6. Is baptism a birth or a burial? Explain. [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that scriptural baptism involves both a burial and a birth. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so

we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4 KJV).]

7. What washes away a person's sins, the blood of Jesus or the waters of baptism? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that the blood of Jesus washes away our sins when we are scripturally baptized for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:4; I Pet. 3:20-21).]

8. What significance if any did Alexander Campbell play in the "Lord's Church?" If he restored the church were there any people saved during the period before the church was restored? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that the significance of Alexander Campbell to the Lord's church is the same as any other person. Each individual either encourages people to return to the Lord and be a part of His church or the individual encourages people to stay in institutions made by men. The Lord's church has existed since the first Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection. Whenever a person hears, believes, and obeys the truth, the Lord adds him to His church. This happens whether history records it or not. The power is in the word of God, and all who obey it are saved, and those who do not obey it are lost (Rom. 1:16-17; Luke 8:9-15; Matt. 7:21-27).]

9. Do belief, repentance, and confession go together? If you do one aren't you doing them all? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that belief, repentance, and confession, as well as baptism are necessary for salvation from sin. Each of these are distinct acts, and the neglect of one would negate (make void) the others. Baptism would be of no value without faith (Mark 16:15-16). Dead faith, faith that does not follow through with appropriate acts will not save (James 2). Simply to confess the deity of Christ will not save (Matt. 7:21-27; Luke 4:31-37). When three thousand Jews were brought to faith by the preaching of Peter, they were taught to repent and be baptized (Acts 2). No, when one does one act that God requires, he is not at that point doing all that God requires. It is possible to do one act and neglect another.]

10. Will God hear the prayer of a sinner? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that God hears the prayers of all, even those who are disobedient, and that the disobedient will not be blessed by Him even if they pray (Matt. 7:21-27; Isa. 1:15; 59:1-2; John 9:31; Prov. 1:28; 28:9). Prayer is no substitute for failing to do the will of God. Any prayer that is honored by God—that blesses the praying subject—must be asked in harmony with the will of God (I John 3:22; 5:14-15).]

11. In Acts 9:15 Jesus refers to Paul as a chosen vessel, how can he be a chosen vessel if he was not saved on the road to Damascus? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that there is a clear distinction between being called to be an apostle—being a chosen vessel (Rom. 1:1), and being called by the gospel to become a Christian (II Thess. 2:13-15). On the road to Damascus Christ appeared to Saul and appointed

him to be an apostle. Saul still had his sins when he arrived in Damascus and was given the following instruction: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16 KJV).]

12. In Acts 10:47 Peter says "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" The verse says that they have the Holy Ghost but they have not been baptized, how can an unsaved person have the Holy Ghost? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that the Spirit fell on Cornelius as it did on the Apostles in the beginning when Peter began to preach (Acts 2: 1ff.; 11:15). The purpose of Holy Spirit baptism for Cornelius was to confirm to all that God had also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life (Acts 11:15-18; 15:7-18).]

13. What role does the Holy Spirit play in salvation? Does the Holy Spirit have a direct role in salvation? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The Spirit was to come and guide the Apostles into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The Bible teaches us that the new birth is accomplished by the direction of the Spirit (John 3:3-5). By the direction of the Spirit in the word of God, we are baptized into one body—the church of Christ (I Cor. 12:13).]

14. In I Peter 3:21 Peter says "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." How can baptism wash away my sins when Peter makes it clear that it does not put away the filth of the flesh? How can baptism save me if it is the answer of a good conscience toward God because just having a good conscience toward God will not save me? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that baptism is necessary for a clear conscience, but that it requires more than a clear conscience in order to be saved. Saul had a good conscience while persecuting the church of Christ (Acts 9:1-2; 23:1). A person cannot have a clear conscience when deliberately not following the teaching of the Bible, and if our conscience (heart) condemns us, God will also condemn us (I John 3:20).

The Harvesters

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TRAINING PREACHERS SINCE 1969

From the wording of your question, it appears that like Nicodemus someone has confused you on the new birth. Baptism is not washing to clean the filth of the body, it is spiritual cleansing that is emphasized. Do not be misled by those who would confuse you and try to have you not do what the Bible demands of you.]

15. How often are we to take The Lord's Supper? The Bible says the disciples broke bread on the first day of the week but it doesn't say they did it every week. The only commandment given by Jesus concerning this was "*This do in remembrance of me.*" [ANSWER: The Bible teaches us that we are to imitate the good (III John 11). The Bible teaches that what Paul taught one church he taught all churches (I Cor. 4:17). The Bible teaches us to imitate what Paul did in faithfulness (I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:16-19). Paul taught the church at Corinth when they met to worship they were to be cautious as to how they ate the supper (I Cor. 11:17-34). The church at Corinth was meeting for worship on the first day of every week (I Cor. 16:1-2). The Bible teaches that the church of Christ at Troas was meeting upon the first day of the week to break bread (eat the Lord's supper), and Paul preached to them. If Paul was faithful, and he was; if what he taught one church he taught all; and if he taught the church to meet upon the first day of the week, and met with them himself to eat the supper then we have them eating the supper upon every first day of the week. How many first days does a week have? On what day do faithful Christians meet for worship? When you find the day, you will find that you will be using Acts 20:7 and First Corinthians 16:2. Question, will you meet to break bread on the day? If not why not?]

16. Should there be special emphasis placed on the New Testament? Explain. [ANSWER: Yes, the Bible teaches us that the Old Testament was nailed to the cross of Christ (Col. 2:14), and that we are under the New Testament—the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). If you study carefully Hebrews 8, you should understand the difference between the Old and New Testaments.]

17. Can we lose our salvation? Jesus says in John 10:28-29 that no man can pluck us out of his hand or his father's hand. Wouldn't no man include us as well? If I can lose my salvation can I lose my baptism as well? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that we can lose salvation (II John 9-11; Gal. 5:4; II Pet. 3:20-22). The Devil quoted parts of the Bible to Jesus trying to persuade Him to disobey (Matt. 4:1-11), and Jesus responded, "it is written," showing that a part of the teaching of God's word does not equal all of the teaching. There may be other passages that qualify or restrict a given idea or concept. Remember, the whole of anything is the sum of its parts. The interpretation you have been given on John 10:28-29 does what the Devil tried to do with Jesus, do not be deceived by such twisting of the scriptures (II Peter 3:15-18). A person who has been

scripturally baptized will not lose his baptism. That person may lose his soul, if he continues in sin. When a person sins as a Christian, he is called upon to repent, confess the sin, and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:18-24; I John 1:6-10).]

18. Is there a difference in fellowship with God and a relationship with God? Can I be out of fellowship with God but still have my relationship with God? If I quit speaking with my dad the fellowship has been broken, but that doesn't change the fact that I am his son and he is my dad because we are still related no matter what; thus, a relationship is always there whether or not I choose to fellowship with him. [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that all men have a relationship (by this I mean they are accountable to God) with God (Rom. 3:23). The Bible also teaches that a person may refuse to obey the truth and stand condemned by God (II Thess. 1:7-10). The Bible teaches that one may go on and not abide in the teaching of Christ and forfeit fellowship with God and Christ (II John 9-11). The Bible teaches that even though we may be a child of God this does not mean that this relationship will bring eternal blessings. Physical blessings are available to all, even the disobedient (Matt. 5:44-48). You may be a son of the Governor of a state (thus have a relationship with the governor), but if you are convicted of breaking the law you will be punished accordingly.]

19. Was the thief on the cross saved? [ANSWER: Saved from what? Why do you ask?]

20. How was Abraham saved because the Law was not established until Moses' time? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that Abraham was saved by his obedient, living and active faith (Rom. 4; Heb. 11:8-10, 17-19). The sins of Abraham before the Law of Moses, those who sinned under the Law of Moses, and those of us living today are only forgiven when we obey the law we are under, and when we do, the blood of Jesus atones for sins. See Romans Chapters 1 through 3 and Hebrews 9:15.]

21. Did people who were baptized by John the Baptist need to be baptized again to receive the remission of sins? Explain. [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that some did (Acts 19:1-7). Undoubtedly these had been baptized after the baptism of John had been replaced by the one baptism of Ephesians 4:4-6. The Bible teaches in this passage that this one baptism was by the one God, one Lord, and one Spirit and puts one into the one body, the church of Christ which has one hope and one faith. John's baptism today or after the church of Christ began in Acts 2 could not do what the one baptism into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit does.]

22. Is baptism part of The Gospel? Romans 1:16 says "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*" In I Corinthians 1:17 Paul says "*For Christ sent me not to*

baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Here Paul makes a distinction between the Gospel and baptism, Paul says Christ sent him not to baptize so how could he preach the Gospel without baptism? [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that when one preaches Christ as he should he will of necessity preach the one baptism (Acts 8:26-40). Paul preached the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), and to preach the whole counsel of God is to preach baptism (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-7). Someone needs to help you understand the difference between preaching and baptizing. These are not the same acts, neither are they mutually exclusive acts. Many men preach the gospel and have others do the baptizing. In fact this passage teaches the importance of baptism. Paul states if they were using his name (as some do today) this would mean that they would belong to Paul. If they belonged to Paul this would mean that they were baptized into Paul. If they were baptized into Paul, then Paul would need to be crucified for them. Ownership is established by baptism—scriptural baptism makes us belong to Christ (I Cor. 1:12-17). In Verse 16 Paul states that he did baptize, how could he have done this if he was only to preach as you imply in your question? Someone is leading you astray, read the Bible for yourself.]

23. Are the new Bible translations the inspired word of God as well as the King James Version? Is there anything wrong with using one of the new Bible translations? Explain. [ANSWER: The Bible teaches that the Apostles and those whom they laid their hands on were inspired, thus their original documents were inspired, God breathed (John 14:26; 16:13; Gal. 1:6-12; Acts 8:14-24; II Tim. 1:6). There is no inspired English translation. Your use of any translation will depend on your purpose. If you expect to receive the truth of God from any and all English translations, you will be misled. Jehovah's Witnesses have a translation, and there are numerous others that are sold. Great care must be made in determining the English translation to be used. Those which correctly represent the original language may be used, those that do not must be rejected. Likewise, those sections in any English translation that do not represent the original language must be rejected.]



Remember

Fall Semester Begins August 19, 2002
 Annual Lectureship Date, January 20-23, 2003
 Lectureship Theme: "Do You Understand Fellowship?"

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