

Northeast Church of Christ

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From the Pen of Paul: *Heaven*

This week's subject is much more enjoyable than last week. We all would much rather think about heaven than the alternative. However, Jesus taught a great deal about both heaven and hell. Both are good incentives for seeking to do the will of God. The terribleness and ugliness of hell should motivate all of us to want to miss that place; while the beautiful description of heaven and its inhabitants is an encouraging factor in our doing well on earth in order that we may go there when life is over.

While one can go to the place called hell without any effort, this is not true of heaven. The Scriptures teach that only obedient, faithful children of God will go there. The writer of the book of Hebrews informs us of the Christ, "Though 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).

We must not forget that Jesus, during His public ministry on earth, had also taught this vital principle. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he which doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). The argument put up by "Many" who "will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?" indicates that, not only must one be religious, but he must also be religiously *right* (Matt. 7:22).

Faithfulness throughout our Christian life is enjoined upon us. The promise of "a crown of life" is made to those who remain "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). That "crown of righteousness" is for those who, like Paul, "have

fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:6-8). The reaping of the reward is promised to those who are "not weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, *if we faint not*" (Gal 6:9).

From these, and many, many other Scriptures, it is quite evident that only obedient, faithful children of God will be saved. This means that no one can go there unless he:

a. Believes: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). Jesus also warned, "if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). And three verses earlier, Jesus had stated that those who "die in your sins cannot come where I am going" (John 8:21).

b. Repents of sin. Jesus said that it is either "repent or perish" (Luke 13:3). And Paul, on Mars Hill, said that God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:30-31).

c. Confesses Christ. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). This confession is "with the mouth" and "unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10). We see an example of it in Acts 8:37 when the Eunuch said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

d. Is baptized. Foy Wallace, a great preacher of by-gone days, wrote: The plainest statement in the Bible on what to do to be saved is Mark 16:15-16: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Now that verse

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“Someone has said we are not to follow the Old Testament. Is this true?”

Many people are confused about the Bible. They do not realize that it is composed of a library of books. There are 66 books in both Old and New Testament. About 40 different people were engaged by Jehovah God to write the Scriptures. It took about 1600 years for this book to be completed.

So many people think the Bible is somewhat like a storybook. They believe you start with Genesis and end with Revelation, and everything is set chronologically in order. This is not the case at all. We must acknowledge the time and place for all the material found in the Word of God using the words of Paul, “Rightly dividing the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15).

It is the case too often that people do not know when the Old Testament ended and when the new began. In some cases, there are those who believe the Old Testament is binding upon men today as well as the New. They do not realize that God has changed His law. Sometimes I find people who believe and think that if one does not follow the Old Testament then he does not accept it as the Word of God. Of course this is false.

God changed His law when Christ died on the cross. The Bible tells us, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14). This has reference to the Old Testament. The law of Moses (Old Testament) demanded that one keep the law of God perfectly. Thus it was against man.

Once he broke the law there was no way for him to obtain forgiveness except in view of the death of Christ on the cross. Love demands punishment when God's law is broken but the gospel of Christ is a gospel of grace and forgiveness.

The Old Testament was given to the Jewish people (Heb. 1:1-2). Some became proselytes to the Jewish faith. But the law was given to God's chosen people on Mount Sinai. It was not previously for the Gentiles. But when Jesus died He ratified the New Testament with His own blood (Matt. 26:26-28). Since Christ died the Old Testament has not been binding upon any nation or people (Heb. 8:6-13). This is not to say it is not the law of God nor that it was never the law of God. It is to say that God has given us another plan or system which started at the death of Christ on the cross.

The New Testament is for all nations and all peoples (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). We are to hear Christ and not Moses (Matt. 17:1-5). This does not mean that we are not to study the Old Testament. In fact, it was given for us to study and learn (Rom. 15:4). I like to think of the Old Testament as being the glove, and the New Testament as being the hand that fits into the glove.

We must follow the gospel of Jesus Christ without additions or subtractions. Remember the Old and New Testaments are from God. But the New Testament is for people to follow in religion today.

—Malcolm L. Hill

cannot be simplified and it cannot be misunderstood, without some help. He shall be saved that believeth and is baptized. It does not read, he shall be saved that believeth. It does not read, he shall be saved that is baptized. It reads, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved! The principal sentence is, he shall be saved. The dependent clause is, that believeth and is baptized. The word that points out the fellow—‘he’—that shows who shall be saved. This is the simplest statement in the Bible on what to do in order to be saved.” Isn't it amazing how folks

have twisted this plain, simple passage? Also read and study carefully Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16 and I Peter 3:21.

e. Is faithful. See above. Also read II Peter chapter 1 as Peter discusses how we are to grow as Christians.

How about you? Have you obeyed this Gospel plan of salvation? And are you striving to live faithfully till death or until Jesus comes. You *must* if heaven is to be your home!

—Paul M. Wilmoth