



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

July 2, 2017

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Steve McCreary

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Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:30 pm

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FINDING THE ANCIENT PATHS

By Stephen Scaggs

Twenty-five hundred years ago, through Jeremiah, God said to the southern kingdom of Judah, “*Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*” However, they said, “*We will not walk therein*” (**Jeremiah 6:16**).

God has never left His people without guidance. In the Hebrews Scriptures, through Moses God gave the Israelites the Law (or Torah; sometimes this refers to the first five books of the Old Testament or to the 613 specific laws of the enclosed). Throughout Israel’s history, the prophets repeatedly tried to get God’s people back to the Law. In the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled both the Law and the Prophets (**Matthew 5:17-20**). In a Moses-like persona, Jesus went up the Mount and gave His disciples a new type of Law (or Torah; **Matthew 5-7**). This Law is not one that He would carve into tables of stone, but one that He would etch into their minds and hearts (**Hebrews 8:10-12**).

In our world of religious confusion, people take many paths to find the good way, but God said we could only find the good way in the ancient paths. God pleaded to Judah to find the ancient paths and follow His Law, but they refused to do so and this decision led to their destruction. Today, Jesus is the Way to the Father (**John 14:6**) and we need to be followers of that Way (**Acts 19:2**). That is, we need to get back to Jesus’ teachings and follow His precepts, and only then can we become followers of that Way. “We need to get back to the Bible. We need to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent and call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways. We need to restore the church as it was in the days of the apostles” (housetohouse.com).

While there is no explanation for why people forsake the ancient paths today, their destination is the same as the ancient Jews. It is destruction and their god is their own appetites (**Philippians 3:19**). While some mind only earthly things, we should remember that we are citizens of heaven (**Philippians 3:20a**). When our god is our own appetites, we leave the ancient paths and find new, perverse paths.

WHY WERE YOU BAPTIZED?

Sometimes in talking with our religious neighbors about our differing beliefs, we ask the question, “Do you believe you need to be baptized?” While we may understand what we mean by this question, there may be a very important distinction that we are failing to make. Many religious people believe that they ought to be baptized, but they do not recognize its connection to salvation and remission of sins. They may not recognize that people still have sins on their record until they are baptized (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**). They may not recognize that they are not children of God, but are actually outside of Christ until they are baptized (**Galatians 3:26-27**). Though they may think it is a good thing to do in following Jesus’ example and commands, they may not recognize that baptism actually saves us (**I Peter 3:21**).

Thus, the question must go deeper than ought we to be baptized. Why? Because the Bible makes it abundantly clear that it matters what we believe about baptism. If one’s understanding about the purpose of baptism does not matter, then why is there so much emphasis given to it in the New Testament? Why not baptize infants, as some do? Why not just force people into the water? One’s concept of baptism does matter. Paul held the baptism of about twelve in Ephesus suspect. Thought they had been dipped in water unto John’s baptism, after studying with Paul, they were baptized in the name of the Lord (**Acts 19:1-5**). If what they believed when they were baptized did not matter, then why did they do this?

Paul emphasized what occurs in our relationship to sin when we are baptized. He pointed out that the Christians at Rome should have known that baptism puts us into the death of Christ where the old man of sin is crucified and the new man is raised to walk in newness of life: *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve. For he that is dead, is freed from sin”* (**Romans 6:1-7**).

Thus a man is not freed from his sins until he is baptized into Christ’s death.

Jesus taught, *“he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (**Mark 16:16**), but sadly many today teach, he that believes is saved and should be baptized if he feels like it. With this type of subtle delusion of the truth many may be tricked into believing they are already saved without baptism, and thus see no sense of urgency regarding it. Churches will declare someone saved and schedule baptism maybe a month later, a practice quite different from the biblical example (**Acts 16:30-33**). When the candidate finally gets around to being baptized, he considers it “an outward sign of an inward grace” he is already experiencing – something the Bible does not teach.

One does not need to know everything when one is baptized, but one must understand baptism’s connection to salvation. If a man is not being baptized to be saved then what is his reason for doing it? If his reason is wrong, can his action be right in the sight of God?

By Mark Day