

62. Christ's Church Today

IF JESUS should again come to earth to show men how to live, what church would He join? The Scriptures teach "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Hebrews 13:8 Therefore He would hold to the same principles now as he did when here nearly two thousand years ago. In a world of sinners needing redemption from sin Christ would seek a church that would teach His way of salvation.

A CHURCH PREACHING REPENTANCE

As the Savior went forth to save the lost, of Him it is written, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17.

John the Baptist was still sending forth his clarion call: "Repent you." "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Matthew 3:2, 8. Then came Jesus lifting His voice in ringing tones, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." Luke 13:5.

Repentance means godly sorrow for sin (2 Corinthians 7:9). It includes turning away from sin. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Ezekiel 18:30.

Christ calls the sinner to turn his back on sin, face a God of goodness, and thus be led to true repentance (Romans 2:4).

The story is told of a hardened prisoner who remained untouched by the kind deeds and attentions of any who sought to break through the barriers he had raised against all men. His face was sullen, his heart was bitter, his soul was rebellious, and his speech was blasphemous.

A woman entered the prison with a beautiful little two-year old girl. The hardened prisoner stood apart from his fellows in the open ward. Spying him, the little girl let go the woman's hand and ran toward this wicked criminal. Even the other prisoners feared for the child's safety. But it was too late to do anything.

Stretching forth her tiny arms, the child said, "Take me up, man, take me up." Half-dazed, the stony faced prisoner reached down and picked up the child. She stroked his wiry beard, patted his hardened face, threw her little arms around his great stubborn neck, and exclaimed, I love you, man; I love you, man."

The heart of sin melted, and became a spring that sent forth great tears to trickle down the deep lines of his penitent face. The love of God in the face of a little child had broken a heart of stone. From Calvary's cross the Son of God has been "exalted . . . to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31. Thus is brought to man "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6.

The well-known author Stanley High, in the Christian Century, January 19, 1949, referring to the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, said that the "ecclesiastical leadership at Amsterdam-has transferred its concern from the spiritual business of converting man to the secular business of converting man's institutions. . . . Amsterdam made it appear that the most essential measure for society's redemption is not our own internal repentance, but the world's external reform." (Italics supplied.)

Before the throne of God angels must weep as they bear the message of how the church turns from the saving gospel of Christ for the soul, to tinker with the social structure in a deluded effort to save civilization, as "time is running out." Said Jesus, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Matthew 15:14.

To the last-day Laodicean church Christ says: "I know thy works, that you art neither cold nor hot. . . . Because you says, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knows not that you art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: . . . be zealous therefore, and repent." Revelation 3:15-19. Christ would seek today for a church with a message of repentance.

A CHURCH PREACHING REGENERATION AT CALVARY

It is commonly said that the philosopher asks Why? And the scientist asks How?

Nicodemus leaned to the scientific. To him Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:1 In reply this ruler of the Jews asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Verse 4. Again Christ spoke, 'Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again.' Verse 7. To

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all this Nicodemus could only exclaim, "How can these things be?" Verse 9.

To get on familiar ground, Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Verses 14, 15. Then followed that marvelous verse, John 3:16.

Nicodemus went away. For three years and more he pondered the sayings of Jesus. Then he followed Him to His trial and to Calvary. As he saw the Son of God "lifted up" between earth and heaven like a serpent on a pole, it was then he realized that Christ was dying for the sins of Nicodemus. He must have felt as did the fervent Isaac Watts when he wrote:

"O, never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke"

From the heart of Nicodemus there went forth to God a great and earnest cry, "Lord, make me over again. Let me be born again of water and the Spirit, that I may live like Thee and for Thee." He found true repentance and regeneration at Calvary. They are the product of man's submission to the love of God, who gave His Son for the redemption of the world.

It is interesting to note that Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit." Verse 5.

Baptism involves the water. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist "in Jordan" (Mark 1:9). Then Christ came up "out of the water" (verse 10). John was immersing the candidates. He baptized at Aenon, "because there was much water there" (John 3:23).

After His resurrection Jesus commanded His disciples, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matthew 28:19. Jesus was baptized by immersion, and told His disciples to teach and baptize among all nations. The word baptize means to "immerse or plunge beneath the water."

Born-again Christians are to be born of water as well as of the Spirit. When Philip baptized the eunuch of Ethiopia "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." Acts 8:38, 39.

Bible baptism in water signifies the death of the old man of sin in our nature, his burial, and our resurrection to "walk in newness of life." (Read Romans 6:1-6) By baptism we also proclaim our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Regeneration, Calvary, and baptism are linked together. If Christ were on earth today, He would be looking for a church that practices baptism in the Bible manner of immersion.

Have you followed your Lord down to the watery grave and there been "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"? Romans 6:4. Christ commanded the baptism of converts to His gospel. All those who accept His full gospel should be baptized.

A CHURCH THAT UPHOLDS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

When the great preacher Dwight L. Moody said, "I have never met an honest man that found fault with the Ten Commandments," he took a stand that every honest man should think about. The reason many men find fault with the Ten Commandments is that the commandments find so much at fault in men. Sin is the transgression of God's law, and Christ came to save men from sin and to restore them "to unfeigned obedience to the holy law," as Hiscox rightly states it.

Said the prophet Isaiah of Jesus, "He will magnify the law." Isaiah 42:21. And true to the prophecy, Jesus magnified the Ten Commandments. He took the seventh commandment against adultery, and made it apply to even the lustful desires of the heart. Matthew 5:27, 28). He X-rayed the law of God, and showed that it was a living law whose roots ran deep into the principles of love and holiness. He X-rayed men, and revealed evil rooted deep beneath the surface of outward, letter-of-the-law behavior.

Preaching to a great multitude, He exclaimed, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law." Verse 17. Then it was that He proceeded to magnify this commandment and that commandment.

Most of all, He magnified the law in His life. Coming up to Calvary, He said, I have kept my Father's commandments." Thus He fulfilled the prophecy: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is