

FOUNDATION STONES, PART 3 - SALVATION

Because the Arctic region of North America between Alaska and Greenland is dominated by vast, level plains of tundra there are few natural landmarks. For this reason, over many years the native peoples in these areas have used stone landmarks for navigation, as a point of reference, or as a marker for food caches. They are called Inukshuk, and many are built in the shape of a man to indicate that "someone has passed this way before."

In the book of Joshua, a similar monument was erected when the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into their Promised Land, because God wanted them to remember the heritage their forefathers had given them, and know that "someone has passed this way before."

Joshua 4:21-22 When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these **stones**? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

In the New Testament Church, we also have been given a great heritage, passed on to us by faithful men and women who left us a firm foundation. We can never forget where we have come from, or we will never be able to get where God wants us to go! Twenty-first century Christians need to know without doubt that the things we believe are not just man's idea, but are absolute foundational TRUTH from God's Word.

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

TONIGHT, WE WILL LOOK AT OUR THIRD FOUNDATION STONE – SALVATION.

Since the rise of the modern-day ecumenical movement, it has become politically incorrect to preach an "absolute" message. There are now as many variations on the plan of salvation as there are denominations, creating a logical and theological nightmare! The church world has dealt with the problem by saying "we're all going to the same place, so let's forget doctrine and just love Jesus!"

But the problem with this approach is simple – IT IS WRONG! There are not two, ten or twenty ways to be saved – there is only the Bible way to be saved. What matters is not my opinion, your opinion, or your pastor's opinion – just God's opinion! It is not that WE are right and THEY are wrong – it is that the BIBLE is right and EVERYONE ELSE is wrong!

With all of that in mind, let's begin with some theological common ground that essentially all Christian groups share ...

- We believe that ALL human beings are sinners by birth, by nature, and by deeds. No matter how "good" we try to be, ALL have come short of God's standard of perfection that allows us to go to Heaven.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

- We believe that, when human beings could do nothing to redeem themselves, God Himself provided a way of salvation. By believing on Jesus Christ, we may be born again and inherit eternal life.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

However, this is where we part ways, because while many modern Christian groups preach the gospel (the "good news"), not many groups preach the Bible way to OBEY the gospel. Just like any other commandment in Scripture, to know it is not enough and even to believe in it is not enough – we must OBEY God's commandments.

The New Testament Greek word for "BELIEVE" doesn't mean just to mentally acknowledge something. It is a synonym for "COMMIT" – as in believing something so strongly that it causes you to DO something!

What is the Gospel anyway? The Apostle Paul defined it specifically and let us know that there are THREE PARTS to this "good news" ...

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the **gospel** which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **died** for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was **buried**, and that he **rose again** the third day according to the scriptures:

GOSPEL = DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION

That's why in the very first church service in church history, after the very first sermon preached by one of the Apostles, after the very first time someone ever asked "what shall we do?" and at the very first "altar call" in the church age, Peter said to OBEY the Gospel by doing three things:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

OBEYING THE GOSPEL = REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, HOLY GHOST

Why did Peter preach this message? Because it was the very LAST instruction that Jesus left with His disciples before He ascended!

Luke 24:45-51 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that **repentance** and **remission of sins** should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send **the promise of my Father** upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

Jesus said, "I will be crucified, be buried and then rise again" ... and because of this I want you to go out and preach REPENTANCE, BAPTISM ("remission of sins") in My name, and the baptism of the HOLY GHOST ("the promise of my Father").

THE VERY LAST THING JESUS DID ON EARTH WITH HIS DISCIPLES WAS TO EMPHASIZE HOW TO OBEY THE GOSPEL – AND PETER PREACHED THIS VERY SAME MESSAGE IN ACTS 2:38!

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is not just "accepting" the good news, and it is not just feeling "sorry" for your sins – it is being sorry enough to change!

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Repentance is not a "feeling" – it is a "turning around" or an "about face" – an inward change of attitude leading to an outward change of action. Unless both of these occur, repentance has not taken place.

Matthew 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

REPENTANCE IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION!

Luke 13:3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

WE PUT ON CHRIST WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED!

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

WE ARE BURIED WITH CHRIST WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED!

Romans 6:4 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.

This is why it is absolutely crucial to be IMMERSED in water (burial) in the NAME of Jesus Christ (the One who was buried for us)! Every Christian in your Bible was baptized this way!

WATER BAPTISM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS:

- Day of Pentecost – Acts 2:38 – "name of Jesus Christ"
- Samaritan Believers – Acts 8:16 – "name of the Lord Jesus"
- Cornelius' Household – Acts 10:48 – "name of the Lord"
- Disciples of John – Acts 19:5 – "name of the Lord Jesus"

Matthew 28:18-19 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:

John 5:43 – "I am come in my Father's name"

Matthew 1:21 – "thou shalt call his name Jesus"

John 14:26 – "the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name"

Matthew didn't write his gospel until AD 62. He was making a theological statement about the Oneness of God that had been confirmed by thirty years of the church baptizing every convert in the name of Jesus Christ!

BAPTISM IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION!

John 20:23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

But the church doesn't have power to forgive sins – only Jesus does! So what does this verse mean? Whoever we BAPTIZE has their sins remitted ("washed away"); whoever we don't baptize still has their sin!

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

WHAT IS THE HOLY GHOST?

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

The new birth experience is designed to let your old life die (repentance) and be buried (baptism), and to give you a literal new life by the power of the Holy Ghost. The point of the resurrection is not just that Jesus got up from the grave, but that I can get up out of the deadness of my old life!

- Jesus' being put to death was an act of men.
- Jesus' burial was an act of men.
- But Jesus' resurrection was an act of God!

- Repentance is my action in response to the Gospel.
- Baptism is my action in response to the Gospel.
- But the Holy Ghost is God's action in response to my obedience!

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Jesus rose from the grave in a glorified body – He didn't need the stone rolled away to get out of the tomb. But the stone was rolled away as a SIGN to us that He had actually, literally risen from the dead. The Holy Ghost is God's Spirit – it encompasses much more than merely speaking in tongues. But speaking in tongues is given as a supernatural SIGN to us that we have actually, literally received the Holy Ghost.

Some say you can receive God's Spirit without speaking in tongues, but that's not what the Bible says! Every Christian in your Bible spoke in tongues. Here is the first time any Gentiles received the Holy Ghost ...

Acts 10:44-48 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

THE HOLY GHOST IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION!

Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

1 Corinthians 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues is the original experience of the New Testament Church, and that is our pattern. Not church history, not denominations, but the Bible!

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

References to the plan of salvation can be found everywhere in the Bible if you just take the time to look ...

John 1:12-13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Notice that there are THREE PARTS to our salvation here ... first, we must RECEIVE the Lord into our lives (repentance); second, we must believe in such a way that it invokes the NAME of Jesus Christ over our lives (baptism); third, we must allow God to give us the POWER to change (Holy Ghost). Then and only then, we are BORN AGAIN.

The NEW BIRTH salvation message is one of the foundation stones of the Apostolic church. Every denomination agrees that we need to RECEIVE the Lord, but most of them totally miss the other two elements – taking on His NAME and allowing Him to give us His POWER.

We say that we LOVE this truth, but have you ever thought that we are RESPONSIBLE for this truth? The POWER of the Holy Ghost was primarily given, not just to bless us, but to make us witnesses (Acts 1:8).

- Have YOU obeyed the gospel according to Acts 2:38?
- What are you doing to let OTHERS know about it?