

Crittenden Bible Study

with

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Lesson One

Upon This Rock

Peter had just made a remarkable statement. he confessed that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus acknowledged this awareness as from God and said that it is upon this truth (that Jesus is the Son of God) that Christ would build his church (Matthew 16:18). It is the great kingdom of heaven that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ had been preaching and preparing the world for (Matthew 16:19; 3:2; 4:17).

After Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, he left this world in order that he might send the Holy Spirit. He sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth, bringing to their remembrance those things he had taught them (John 14:26; 16:7). And Christ prayed for their work of bringing people to faith in Christ through their word (John 17:20,21). It was the task of the apostles to write down those things in order that people could know those matters and believe (Ephesians 3:3,4). This word that came to them through inspiration of the Holy Spirit was confirmed by the miraculous signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit that were poured out upon the disciples in the first century (Hebrews 2:3,4). This inspired word is the sword of the Holy Spirit to turn hearts to Christ (Ephesians 6:17).

Jesus had said he would be lifted up from the earth (that is, crucified) and would thus draw all men unto him (John 12:32). Through the preaching of the cross of Christ, the Holy Spirit is actively using the sword (the Bible) to facilitate people being drawn unto Christ, recognizing him as the Son of God who has died for the sins of the world.

It is by the grace of God that we are saved, and not of ourselves (Ephesians 2:8,9). Because God loved us, he sent his Son (John 3:16), even while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). There is nothing that we could have ever done or nothing that we could ever yet hope to do that would merit that wonderful gift of Jesus Christ; it is purely God’s grace bestowed upon sinful mankind.

Indeed, Jesus tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9) but, alas, not all will come to him. He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Hebrews 5:8,9). It is not that we could ever merit or earn it, but that this is the way that God has established for man to accept this free gift from him.

Man can find redemption only in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). It is the power of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that enables our salvation through his blood (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:7). When the sword of the Spirit pierces our hearts, we must humble ourselves before God in repentance (Acts 2:38). We must recognize Christ as the Son of God by the great demonstration of his having been raised from the grave (Romans 1:4). We must confess that we believe that he is the Son of God and that his Father has raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9,10). And we must join in his death, burial and resurrection by being buried with him in the watery grave of baptism and raised from baptism to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3,4).

When we acknowledge him as the Son of God, having repented of our sins, and obey from the heart the form of his death, burial and resurrection in baptism, it is then that we have the forgiveness of our sins (Romans 6:16-18; Acts 2:38). When we call upon him in faith and obedience, our sins are washed away by his blood as we are baptized into his death (Acts 22:16). It is nothing that we deserve or merit. God is in no way in debt to us. But rather we have been obedient to his will. We have with good conscience responded to his pleading for us to obey the gospel call to be baptized into Christ's death. And so the Bible says that baptism saves us. It is not that the water or the act themselves have some special powers, but rather it is our entering into a covenant relationship with God by doing his will, all empowered by the resurrection of Jesus from the grave (1 Peter 3:21).

It is a severe mistake to teach that baptism is a work of human merit and to teach a doctrine of salvation by human works. Nothing can be further from the truth. Salvation is the gift of God, nothing that anyone could ever deserve. But we do accept his gift on his terms and not our own. We are children by faith in his Son when we put his Son on in baptism (Galatians 3:26,27). And he adds us to his church (Acts 2:41,47), the body of saved people.

On each Lord's Day, all over the world, members of the Lord's church gather in their respective communities to give tribute to the blood sacrifice that Christ made for us, enabling us to enjoy the gift of salvation in Christ's name. It is our freedom from the bondage of sin. When we partake of the memorial emblems every Sunday, as we observe the Lord's Supper, we so acknowledge our continuing faith that Jesus is indeed God's Son, and thereby express our love and appreciation for the blood that he shed for the remission of our sins.

Yes, it is upon this great truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, that Christ built his church. We would urge everyone to learn of the church that Christ built, that belongs to him, that he is the head of (Ephesians 1:22,23) and that he is coming again for (Ephesians 5:23-27).

Please call upon us for any assistance that we may be to you. We are anxious to emulate the spirit of Christ in our lives and show our love for our fellow man. We will be more than happy in any way that we can to help you as you strive to come to God through his Son Jesus Christ.

Thank you so much for studying this vital topic with us.

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