

Baptism Saves Us Not

By Joel Mark Ellis

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: (1 Peter 3:21 KJV)

What role does baptism play in the salvation of a sinner? The testimony of scripture is clear. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). In Acts 2:38, Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Paul wrote that "as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death," and that "we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). Paul also emphasized the connection between baptism and becoming part of Christ in his letters to the churches of Corinth and Galatia (1Co. 12:13; Ga. 3:26-27).

Perhaps no statement of scripture on the purpose is baptism is any clearer than Peter's affirmation in 1 Peter 3:21. Nevertheless, nearly every Protestant denomination stands in opposition to this simple declaration by one of the Lord's apostles. Ask your pastor, read your church's creed or statement of faith, or simply observe what happens at the conclusion of most denominational services. Men and women are not being told to "repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins." They are hearing an invitation to pray the sinner's prayer and ask Jesus into their heart.

The position of most denominational churches is "baptism doth also now save us not." That may be a direct quotation of scripture, but it is a partial quotation that misrepresents the meaning of the original text. Peter did not teach, "Baptism doth also now save us not." The apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, wrote that "baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 3:21 KJV).



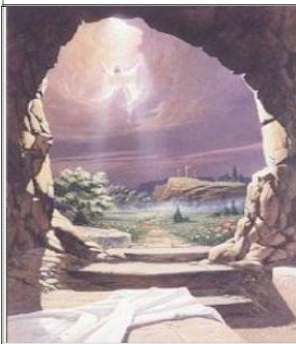
The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

The Light Near Damascus

By W. Curtis Porter



Thought to Ponder

Christianity is in its very essence a resurrection religion. The concept of resurrection lies at its heart. If you remove it, Christianity is destroyed.

Not long after the church was established in Jerusalem a great persecution arose that scattered the disciples abroad. The opposing Jews wished to stamp out the religion of Jesus Christ, and they expected persecution to accomplish their desires. But the dispersion of the church meant the increase and growth of the Lord's cause.

In the work of persecution no name is more prominent than the name of Saul of Tarsus. **"He made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).** He was not content to persecute the Lord's disciples in his own city, but went even to strange cities. On a mission of persecution we find Saul, with some companions, on the way to the city of Damascus. As they neared the city, there was a great demonstration. In the language of Saul himself, we have it related this way: **"And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light about me" (Acts 22:6).**

With respect to this heavenly light, the questions are often asked, "What was its purpose? Why did this light shine about Saul?" Some have thought it was evidence of his salvation and they have often insisted that such has been experienced by them. This, however, is a mistaken idea. The light did not shine around Saul as an evidence of his salva-

No such demonstration ever occurred in the conversion of any other man. There is a reason for it. All the other apostles had seen the Lord while He was on the earth. They also saw Him after His resurrection and before He ascended. No later appearance to them was necessary.

tion. Neither did it appear for the purpose of saving him. I know that this heavenly light led, even directly, to his conversion, but that was not the purpose of the light. To understand the purpose of this light, we must keep some divine statements in mind. These may be found in the following:

During the personal ministry of Christ He selected a number of men to be His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth. These He called "apostles." While the two words, of course, are not synonymous, they are applied to the same men. Apostles are those who are sent. Witnesses are those who testify of things they know from what they have seen. But the two words are so used of the same men that we almost think of them as interchangeable.

(Continued on page 2)

Classes this Week:			
Sunday 5:15 Kid's Class at the Building	Mon 7PM Men's Class at the Davis's on Elders	Mon 12 Noon Campus Study	Thurs 11AM Campus Study
Sick			<u>September Birthdays</u>
Fran Snyder <small>(Mother of Carla Humphrey)</small>	Lori Holloway	Chick Wade	1 - Ryan Seymore
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson <small>(Toni Herd's Sisters)</small>	Carrie Chavers <small>(Friend of Sharon Bailey)</small>	Jared Nixon	2 - Denise Davis
Ross Folmar	Grandparents of Mary Ann Roberts	Joe Perry <small>(Anna Miller's Relative)</small>	3 - Trenton Anderson
Ed Mort <small>(Friend of Sharon Bailey)</small>	"Grandmama" Odessa Wyatt <small>(Dyle's grandmother)</small>	Erlene Davis <small>(Walker Davis' mother)</small>	4 - Kevin Anderson
Gerald White <small>(Christopher's and Wesley's Father)</small>	Dave Brown <small>(Friend of the Lanier's)</small>	Bill Rhodes <small>(Toni Herd's Uncle)</small>	4 - Jillian Petty
Marty and Aubrey Meeks <small>(Toni Herd's Nephews)</small>	Frank Johnson <small>(Debbi Coleman's Uncle)</small>	Herbert Missildine <small>(Toni Herd's Uncle)</small>	10 - Matthew Sullivanne
Christi Gibson <small>(Fallon Hartsell's Mother)</small>	Mike Reed <small>(Friend of the Long's)</small>	Call Yvette to have a name added to this list	10 - Joshua Carter
News and Notes			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jon Coleman's surgery went well on Tuesday. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Simpson continues to struggle with back issues. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Change of address: Jeremiah Johnson family 829 Tacoma Drive Auburn, AL 36830 502-8428 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Our Gospel Meeting with Tim Stephens will start next Sunday! <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Our Monthly Men's business meeting will be this afternoon. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> We want to encourage our regular students to consider placing membership with us if you have not already done so! <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> After every services Audio CDs will be available in the foyer of the sermon.			
11 - BJ Winslett 11 - Sheryl Fowler 12 - Jared Johnson 13 - Jared Rice 14 - Patsy Ogle 17 - Laura Weldon 21 - Sarah Chandler 24 - Blake Armstrong 24 - Wade Winslett			

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or E-mail: LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

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able terms.

The apostles were to go into all the world to preach the gospel, and in so doing they were to testify concerning Christ. Hence, Peter declared, **"Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead"** (Acts 10:40-42).

There can be no doubt that the witnesses here mentioned were the apostles whom the Lord had chosen, and to them the Lord declared, **"Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"** (Acts 1:8).

But for a man to be a witness of the Lord he must be qualified, and an essential qualification for a witness was that he must see the Lord after His resurrection. How could one testify that God had raised up Christ from the dead unless one saw Him after His resurrection? The necessity of this is shown in the proceedings by which one was selected to take the place of Judas. Judas was one of the apostles — one of those chosen to be witnesses. Therefore, someone who could testify of the resurrection of Christ was selected to be his successor. The divine record says concerning the matter, **"Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection"** (Acts 1:21-22). As a result, Matthias was chosen. He could be a "witness of the resurrection" because he had seen the Lord after His resurrection — he was with them until the Lord was taken up from among them. No one then could be an apostle — a witness — unless he had seen the risen Lord. Keep this in mind as we study Saul.

The divine record tells us in plain words the purpose of that light — if we understand what caused the light. Jesus appeared to Saul as he neared Damascus. When He appeared, it was a glorious appearance. The glory of Jesus was so great that Saul was stricken blind. **"And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus"** (Acts 22:11). It was at this time that he saw Jesus, and His glory was

so great that the physical eyes of Saul could not endure it.

Let us read the purpose of this appearance of the Lord. Was it to give proof of Saul's salvation? What was its purpose? When Saul reached Damascus and there waited for information that had been promised him, we learn the Lord sent Ananias, a disciple in that city, to him. Here's what he said to Saul when he arrived: **"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard"** (Acts 22:14-15). How could Saul be His witness without seeing Him? He could not.

If we need it to be made any plainer to us, it is made so in Acts 26. Reading verse 16, we find the language of Saul as he later rehearses the matter, giving the Lord's words as they were spoken to him: **"But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose..."** Here we have it. The Lord is actually telling the "purpose" of His appearance to Saul — **"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose."** For what purpose? To save him? To prove he was already saved? No. For what purpose then? **"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."**

The light was caused by the glory of the Lord. It shone in splendor because the Lord was there. The light appeared because the Lord appeared, but the Lord appeared to Saul to qualify him as a witness for Him. He must go out to testify of the risen Christ as an apostle to the Gentiles. Consequently we later hear Paul emphasizing his apostleship by a series of questions: **"Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"** (1 Cor. 9:1). He had seen Jesus. He saw Him near Damascus, and was therefore qualified to be an apostle — a witness. For this reason the Lord appeared to him. This was the purpose of the light.

No such demonstration ever occurred in the conversion of any other man. There is a reason for it. All the other apostles had seen the Lord while He was on the earth. They also saw Him after His resurrection and before He ascended. No later appearance to them was necessary. But Saul did not see Him after He arose, and he had to see Him at a later day in order to testify. No witnesses have been chosen since Saul was chosen, and no such light has ever occurred in the conversion of any man since. There is no need for such today, for witnesses are not now being selected. It will not occur in your case.



Pattern Theology

By Brock Hartwigen

Simply put, no pattern means nothing to obey. Nothing to obey means no obedience. No obedience means no salvation! If that is the case, then why bother to look for Jesus? No pattern theology does more than reject the concept of patterns, it is effectively also a rejection of salvation.

Pattern theology is the belief that God has given mankind patterns in the Bible and expects, yea, demands that we follow them. This has been the traditional view of the Scriptures in the church since the restoration. There are some in the church today that are questioning this approach to Scripture. In fact, some have come right out and denied it. The following quote is from a speech delivered by brother Rubel Shelly at the Missouri Street Church of Christ in West Memphis, Arkansas, on April 20-21, 1990.

"Are we really looking for a pattern? We have taken Acts and tried to make it a prison. Acts was not meant to be a pattern. I reject pattern theology. The Scripture is not a book of case law to be cited like a bunch of proof texts. The way to teach people about the Bible is not to quote a series of steps to salvation. I am not looking for a pattern. I am looking for a Person."

If brother Shelly is right, then why did God give us two detailed descriptions of the qualifications for elders if they are not a pattern to follow? Why did God give instructions about the specific emblems to be used in the communion and what they were to represent if they are not a pattern to follow?

If brother Shelly is right, then what about Jesus and John's teaching about the necessity of doing God's will. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17).

If doing God's will does not mean doing what God has determined should be done and how God has determined it should be done, then what does it mean?

If brother Shelly is right, then let's sprinkle babies! To restrict baptism to repentant believers and to insist that it must be full body immersion is to insist that the Bible contains a pattern for candidates and a pattern for the method which must be followed.

A rejection of the concept of binding patterns is a rejection of the plain teaching of **Romans 6:17** "But God be

thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered [them]" (emphasis added). The Roman brethren were no longer "servants of sin" because they had "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered." Notice they didn't simply believe, nor did they simply obey, but they obeyed the very "form of doctrine which was delivered." The Simple English Bible translation is quite clear as to what Paul meant. It reads "pattern of teaching." If **Romans 6:17** isn't an endorsement of pattern theology, then what is it?

Brother Shelly asserted that he wasn't "looking for a pattern," but that he was "looking for a Person." The person we should be looking for is Jesus and Jesus said we must obey God's will. By telling us that we must obey God's will, Jesus is telling us that there is a pattern. We find Christ when we follow the pattern. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them [pattern theology], he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). And "if a man love me, he will keep my words [pattern theology]: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). No man can find Jesus unless Jesus is willing to "manifest" himself to him. No man can find Jesus unless Jesus comes to him. Brother Shelly and others can look for Jesus all they want, but without him coming to them and manifesting himself to them, their search will be in vain.

The person we should be looking for is Jesus and the Bible says that Jesus is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). Where there is no direction, instruction, pattern (call it what you will), there can be no obedience. If there is no obedience, then there is no salvation. Simply put, no pattern means nothing to obey. Nothing to obey means no obedience. No obedience means no salvation! If that is the case, then why bother to look for Jesus? No pattern theology does more than reject the concept of patterns, it is effectively also a rejection of salvation.

