

It Is Written

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We Are Simply Christians... (Without being members of any denomination. You can be too!)

By Dale Smelser

We read with interest the reports on every hand of the growing disenchantment with present religious forms which originated in the middle ages and have become meaningless. We hear of displeasure with denominational structures and their pronouncements which reflect only the preferences of an influential elite, ignoring the convictions of the rank and file. Because of these aspects of modern religion some have decided that Christianity is not relevant to this day and age. We believe they have so decided because they are not sufficiently acquainted with the scriptures to be able to distinguish between the relevant gospel of Christ, and what men have added to religion since, and which truly are not relevant to serving God.

If some of these things have troubled you and you have felt an urge, or even a yearning, to return to the simple uncomplicated religion of Christ, and if you have felt the desire to strip away all non-essential elements of religion and simply abide by the truths of Christ, truths which alone can transform the soul and bind it to God, let us suggest that such a possibility actually exists.

Let us begin with one essential fact. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. His coming, his mission, and his new message were all foretold in the Old Testament (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 6:13; Jeremiah 31:31-33) which Jehovah used to govern Israel until the Christ should come and establish the New for all mankind (Galatians 3:19,23,24).

The New Testament is the word of Christ. It reveals the religion of Christ (Hebrews 9:15-17). By studying it we become aware that among the followers of Christ, no denominational organizations existed whatever. All such began at a later time. We see people hearing the gospel and in faith obeying the conditions of God's grace. That is, they turned to God and were baptized in order to be forgiven of their sins. Being thus saved, they were added to the Lord's people, or church (Acts 2:36-47). As the gospel spread, we find them assembling together in congregations in various localities. Each congregation was under its own elders (Acts 14:23) and no one else on earth. These elders could not make laws or be masters. They were given the responsibility of tending and caring for the congregation as shepherds would a flock (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Peter 5:1-3). The only headquarters those disciples knew was heaven, where their head, Jesus Christ, was and is (Ephesians 1:22,23).

Their worship was something to participate in, not something to watch. On the first day of the week, for instance, they would eat the Lord's supper and hear preaching (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). They would share their prosperity, and we find contributions being collected on no other day than that (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). Incidentally, no hierarchy could tax them or tell them how much to give. They had no organizations clamoring for their support. They gave as they individually purposed in their own hearts (2 Corinthians 9:6,7). In their assemblies they all would sing (Ephesians 5:19) and all pray with various ones leading (1 Corinthians 14:15,16). In all this they were all necessarily involved, for each person was a priest (Revelation 1:5,6). No one could perform his service or worship for him.

They lived godly lives. They cared for their poor. They taught others. They sent out preachers where they themselves could not go. With simplicity of faith and fervor there was no need of centralization. Without organized machinery, the gospel was preached throughout civilization in a short time (Colossians 1:23). These disciples were known as Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). They wore no sectarian names. Their religion was not sensual or materialistic. They sought to impress God with the only thing that ever impresses him -- contrite obedience (1 Samuel 15:22). Their appeal was not social or recreational. They offered the gospel to a troubled world for it was God's power to save (Romans 1:16) and any other appeal was beneath them.

"If only such could be today," many say. But it is! Free men and women over the earth have despaired of denominationalism, seeing in it no necessity or relevance and only a cause of division. They desire the simplicity of what Christ authored, and their number is increasing. How many have taken such a stand? Who knows?!

They are related and connected only in Christ and not some organization with machinery to keep a tally. Periodicals such as Time Magazine have listed the number in this nation alone in excess of two and a quarter million. We will not assess their estimation and try to number a people spiritually belonging only to God.

What is important is that a group of such people meet within minutes of where you live. They worship and serve God in the same way the early disciples did. Christ is their only creed and the scriptures their only guide. They are not members of any human denomination, they are simply a congregation, or church, of Christ. They would like to share Christ with you and with all the world.

YOU TOO CAN BE JUST A CHRISTIAN and serve God without belonging to any denomination, bound by no denominational laws or obligations. If such freedom appeals to you, please contact us.

Loving Christ Is Conditional

By Ira Mikell

The Bible teaches that loving Christ is conditional. Let us study some of them briefly.

Loving Christ demands that we keep all of His commandments. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," (John 14:15). These commandments are found in the New Testament, from Matthew to Revelation. They are also known as "the doctrine of Christ," (2 John 9). We are not to follow the commandments of men such as Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, or John Calvin.

Loving Christ demands that, in order to remain in fellowship with Him, we must repent of our sins. In I John 1:6-9, we read, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Loving Christ demands that the sinner must give up his sinful life and obey God's plan of salvation. Jesus says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works," (Matthew 16:24-27).

Loving Christ demands that we live righteously so that we may be able to enter Heaven. Jesus, in Revelation 2:10 says, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." This means that we must be both hearers and doers of the word. In other words, "faith without works is dead," (James 2:20). Furthermore, we ought to study God's word and apply it to our lives (2 Timothy 2:15) and teach others also (2 Timothy 4:2). In so doing, we will be prepared to stand before Christ at the judgment, ready to give answer to those things that we have done both in deed and in word, whether good or evil. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, we read, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Baptism And The Blood of Christ

By Kyle Campbell

Jesus said in Luke 22:20, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." From this verse, we are taught that His blood has established what we called the New Covenant. Jesus is the mediator of this covenant (Hebrews 9:15), and just as the first covenant was established with blood (Exodus 24:8), so was this New Covenant (Hebrews 9:18-26).

When you look in the New Testament, it is not difficult to see the many functions of the blood of Christ. It justifies us (Romans 5:9), forgives us (Ephesians 1:7), redeems us (Colossians 1:14), cleanses us (1 John 1:7), and washes us (Revelation 1:5).

How do we come in contact with the blood of Christ? His blood is contacted through baptism. Through baptism we are buried with Him into His death (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12). Since baptism washes away our sins (Acts 22:16), and puts us into Christ (Galatians 3:27), it is easy to see how it accomplishes the purpose of connecting us with His blood. If you want to be saved, there is more to it than just belief. Be immersed into water for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38)!