## The Gospel, Salvation & the Sinner (3)

by Harry Osborne

For the past two weeks, we have shown that the gospel of Christ reveals a pattern for us to obediently follow if we are to fulfill our responsibility relating to salvation. His instruction to us was left in terms of a will which He announced after His resurrection (see Matt. 28:18-20, Mk. 16:15-16 and Lk. 24:46-47). Gathering all the facts to determine the whole pattern revealed, we see both the responsibilities enjoined upon us and the blessings received when we meet the conditions given. Jesus commanded that we must hear the gospel, believe it, repent of our sins, be baptized and continue to do all things commanded by Christ through His apostles. All who meet these conditions are disciples of Christ, saved and enjoy the remission of sins.

This pattern was consistently followed when the apostles went throughout the world preaching the gospel. The book of Acts is the historical record of that spread of the gospel.

Acts 2 is the first such account. After the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles as Jesus promised (Acts 1:8), the crowd wondered what was taking place. Peter declared that the events were fulfilling the prophecy of Joel. Joel said that a time was coming when the power of the Spirit would show that salvation in its fullness is available to mankind. Peter then preached a sermon affirming that Jesus was the Christ of promise in the Old Testament, approved of God, killed by the multitude in Jerusalem and raised from the dead.

The bottom line was that many of the hearers of this gospel message had helped kill the Christ. They were guilty of sin. Did they understand the implications of Peter's sermon? They certainly did, for the text says:

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

What do we learn from their reaction? **First**, we see that they believed the message preached. They understood that Jesus was not a criminal rightly condemned to death, but the righteous Messiah whom they had helped to murder. They understood their sin and believed in the facts presented about Jesus Christ. **Second**, they did not think that accepting those facts was the end of their responsibility to receive salvation, for after believing, they still asked, "What shall we do?" They did not say the sinners prayer and accept Jesus into their hearts as their personal Savior at the point of faith. Nor did the apostle Peter instruct them to do so. He taught the pattern revealed by Jesus.

In response to their inquiry of what they must do, Peter replied, "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" (Acts 2:38).

Peter taught what Jesus taught. Both taught that man must repent and be baptized **for** ("in order to obtain") the remission of sins. Neither taught that one's sins were remitted before repentance or before baptism. It may be a popular doctrine to say that one's sins are remitted at the point of faith (which precedes repentance and baptism), but the gospel message does not teach such.

After the believers repented and were baptized, was that the end of their responsibility according to this text? No, look at the further record of their following the pattern given by Jesus:

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:41-42).

In other words, they did as Jesus instructed in observing all things commanded through the apostles (Matthew 28:20).

In Acts 8:4-13, the conversion of those in Samaria is recorded in these words: "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them" (Acts 8:4-5). It began by one preaching the word and the Samaritans hearing that word. Several phrases in the context tell us about the nature of the message preached. As seen in the text, "preaching the word" was equivalent to "preaching Christ."

Acts 8:12 specifies the message saying that Philip "preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." Before His death, Jesus had said that the kingdom of God would come with power during the lifetime of some of those hearing Him speak (Mark 9:1). After His resurrection, Jesus spoke of that promised power when He said it would come with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. Therefore, the promised kingdom came at that time. A kingdom is a realm of authority overseen by a king who has the right to rule that realm. Christ's kingdom is ruled in His name or by His authority. Thus, to preach the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ is to preach the fulfillment of the divine kingdom as a present reality in the spiritual rule of Jesus Christ through His law - the Gospel.

How did people respond to that message? The record says, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8:12-13). Just as those in Acts 2 believed the message and responded by being baptized into Christ, these people of Samaria did the same. They did not repeat the sinner's prayer or follow the teaching of some man-made doctrine. They did as Jesus had previously commanded by believing and being baptized.

Was this conversion to Christ all that was necessary to assure their eternal security? Once they were saved, could they neglect the rest of Christ's commands and still have a hope of heaven? Christ had said that one must be taught to observe all things He commanded. Was this essential for the Samaritans? The case of Simon makes it clear that such was necessary. Simon had repented of his deception of people as a sorcerer and had responded to the Gospel through faith and baptism (Acts 8:9-13). However, he later tried to purchase a miraculous gift of God with money (Acts 8:18-19). Peter clearly stated his condition as a result of this sin:

Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity (Acts 8:20-23).

Simon was told that he could not continue enjoying the blessings of salvation if he remained in sin. He was told to repent of those sins and conform to the pattern laid down by Christ in His commands delivered through the apostles.

It should be obvious that the case of the Samaritans exemplifies the obedience to the pattern given by Jesus regarding salvation. Those not conforming their lives to the same pattern today have no hope of the salvation Jesus offers. Those who desire that salvation will obey the gospel of Christ just as those in Samaria did in the first century.