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3:1-6). Nor can we rest in ignorance for to acknowledge that the Bible is the Spirit-inspired Word of God is to admit the necessity for all of us to become students of it. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil...Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,...and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ...taking ...the sword of the Spirit, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD" (read Ephesians 6:10-17).

Of course many today who read such passages say, "See, Bible understanding is not important, all you need is for the Spirit to lead you!" Do they know how the Spirit leads us? God has not left us to our own assumptions.

Knowing then that Bible knowledge is essential, we are back to our question, worded in a positive way, "How can I correctly interpret the Bible?" Our method of Bible study and the tools we use to aid our study are no doubt among the areas which need to be addressed. But our attitude perhaps more greatly affects our understanding of God's word than anything else. This is clearly demonstrated in the scriptures. Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com

Paul, in the same letter in which he affirmed that we have to read what he wrote to understand the mystery of Christ, says the following: "Put on the whole armor of God,

HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

- If you want friends — **be friendly.**
- If you want someone to smile — **smile.**
- If you want courtesy — **be courteous.**
- If you want knowledge — **study.**
- If you want a good name — **live right.**
- If you want to reap well — **sow well.**
- If you want to be a Christian — **obey God's word.**
- If you want to go to heaven — **live a Christian life**

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3
- Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24
- Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30
- Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21
- Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27
- Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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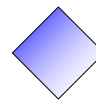


Schedule of Assembly

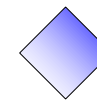
Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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The Voice of Truth



May 29, 2011

"Thou Art Dead"

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Jesus charged the apostle John to write to the church in Sardis, "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead" (Revelation 3:1).

I read this passage, and I wonder how many churches there are today like Sardis. Can you picture a congregation of the Lord's people thinking it was very much alive, but only to hear the Lord pronounces that church dead? Christ says, "I know", and this is repeated by the Lord in all these letters to the churches. He knew them, because Christ looks at the spiritual strength, and outward actions do not always reflect spiritual conditions. I sit here writing this article and thinking to myself: What causes a congregation of the Lord's people to be dead?

1. What would cause my Lord to say, "thou art dead?" Teaching and following error. The Lord never promised to bless those who follow error, no matter how sincere they may be. Paul exhorted Timothy to charge some men not to teach a different doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3-7). Accepting false doctrine would produce unfaithfulness (1 Timothy 4:1-3). It will cause the Lord to remove His candlestick and fellowship from this place (Revelation 2:5; 2 John 9). "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6). God wants us to hate every false way (Psalm 119:104).

2. What would cause my Lord to say, "thou art dead?" Conforming to the world. Jesus told the apostles, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). Worldliness is one of the greatest dangers facing the church of the Lord. Satan, as the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), puts all kinds of pressure on the church to conform to the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world,

the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17). "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). We cannot make friends with the world (standards) without becoming the enemy of God (James 4:4). When Christians, and the church exhibit desire for and make compromises with the world, they are guilty of spiritual adultery, and the church will die!

3. What would cause my Lord to say "thou art dead?" Neglect of members. What do we need to do to cause the Lord to say, "thou art dead?" NOTHING! "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but do them not; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their gain" (Ezekiel 33:31). "And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand" (Matthew 7:26). This is the height of stubbornness. But, then it is nothing new and is one of the problems in the church today. The children of Israel made a conscious choice not to do the will of God, just as many people do today. Individual members who engage in sinful activities and do not repent or change their ways, thus bringing reproach on the body of Christ. We neglect to do those things that make the church vital and alive.

4. What would cause my Lord to say, "thou art dead?" Not being united! After all, the church is to be "fitly joined together" (Ephesians 4:16). "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and (that) there be no divisions among you; but (that) ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" Brethren, this implies cooperation by brethren; unity, harmony, being "fitly joined together" is a mark of Christianity. Nobody even likes that person who always has to have his own way, or will not cooperate with others.

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Who always thinks their way is the only way. When I was a child, playing at recess in school, there was always someone that insists everything must be as he calls it. Do you know what happened? Soon the others would leave him, and there he is all alone. The same thing is true on the adult level. God is not pleased with the uncooperative person who is unwilling to sacrifice himself for the benefit and good of others. God is not pleased with such a person. A lack of this attitude hinders the progress of the cause of Christ. God wants us to love one another, *"For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another"* (1 **Thesalonians 4:9**). And what does love do? *"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not re-*

"Nicodemus Meets Jesus"

By Jarrod Jacobs

In **John 3:1-21**, we read what transpired between Jesus and Nicodemus one night. Sadly, people use this chapter to justify salvation by faith alone and other false doctrines. Let us study this text, and learn the truth.

Nicodemus Came To Christ (v. 1-2).

As we begin, we need to remember that Nicodemus was not just any man. He was one of the Pharisees and *"a ruler of the Jews"* (v. 1). His reason for meeting Jesus at night is not known. Some suggest he was afraid that others would see him with Jesus. Others suggest he went at night thinking he would have a better chance of having an audience with Jesus at that time. Whatever the reason, he came to Jesus, and told Him that he was not the only one who believes. He said, *"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God..."* (v. 2). He and others recognized His authority as the Son of God. His response to Christ was not unlike the response of those who heard Jesus' sermon in **Matthew 5-7**.

Jesus Explained That Nicodemus Needed To Be Saved (v. 3-5).

Here, Jesus answers a question before it is asked. He told Nicodemus, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (v. 3). Nicodemus had not asked a question yet, but Jesus knew what was in his heart. However, Nicodemus misunderstood and thought Jesus was talking about a physical rebirth. He asked, *"How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"* (v. 4). Jesus'

joice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 **Corinthians 13:4-7**).

To have spiritual life with Christ, and to dwell with Him eternally, we must not teach or follow error, but His word. As the church, the called out, we must not conform to the world. The church must separate from the world and be transformed into the image of Christ (**Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18**). As the church, to make our calling and election sure (2 **Peter 1:10**), we must not neglect our duties, but be doers of the word (**James 1:22**). We must as the church, be united! The church that does follow and teach error, conforms to the world, neglects its duties and is not united in Christ, will surely hear the Lord say one day, *"Thou art dead!"* ♦

response was, *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (v. 5). What we read is Jesus explaining that it is a spiritual birth, not a physical rebirth, that one must undergo in order to be saved. Our Baptist friends and others like to say that the water is the physical birth, and the spirit is the spiritual birth. Yet, this is not what Jesus was teaching.

The truth is that those who teach this have no greater understanding of the new birth than Nicodemus did! Read this section again and see that Jesus wasn't explaining how babies are born, but how a man can be spiritually born! Therefore, to be born again is to be born of water and the spirit, and vice versa. He was not talking about two separate births, but one spiritual birth that puts one into the kingdom of God!

Jesus Explains The New Birth In More Depth (v. 6-10).

In the next several verses, Jesus continues His teaching. **John 3:6** says, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* This passage compares two aspects of one's life: The flesh (living after the flesh, not simply being born, **1 Cor. 3:1-3; Eph. 2:3**), and the spirit (living after the spirit, in a spiritual way). Jesus then tells Nicodemus not to wonder, or marvel about the fact that one must be born again.

Jesus explains further by talking about the wind. *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither*

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it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (v. 8). Many have made this verse very difficult to understand when it does not have to be. What Jesus is teaching is that while we cannot see the wind, we see the results of the wind. So also with the Holy Spirit. We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we see people who have been born spiritually. They have laid aside the cares of this life, and are living for Christ (**Gal. 2:20**). This is not a miraculous thing. The Holy Spirit works through God's word (**Heb. 4:12**), *"reproving"* people as needed (**Jn. 16:7-8**). In every case of conversion, we see this happen (**Acts 2-19**), and it would happen to Nicodemus this way if he was born again.

Some have compared the wind to the new birth. It is not so. This section speaks about the one born anew! *"So is every one that is born of the Spirit"* (**Jn. 3:8**)! With those things said, we see Jesus rebuking the teacher for not understanding this simple truth (**Jn. 3:9-10**). How sad it is when folks calling themselves teachers do not understand!!!

Jesus Prophecies His Death And What It Means (v. 14-16).

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Jesus prophesies that His death will be a crucifixion. Just as Moses lifted up the brass serpent on a pole, so will Christ be lifted up on a cross. In **Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19**, we see that He was crucified. Yet, as a result of His death on the cross, people today can be saved (v. **15-16**).

When Jesus said those words, He revealed the greatest plan for salvation ever offered. He said, *"whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting*

How Can We Understand the Bible Correctly?

By Kevin A. Sulc

The fact that there are so many different interpretations of various scriptures is a major source of division among "Bible believers." Why is this? An increasingly popular answer and "solution" is the notion that most of what the Bible teaches (AKA doctrine) is not really important anyway and so it doesn't matter. Everyone should just "agree to disagree."

This popular philosophy is a superficial solution because it only ignores the problem. This then creates another problem when it comes to Bible study: people don't. If it doesn't really matter, then why bother? The result is a

life" (**Jn. 3:15-16**). Many denominational folks have taken this to mean that we may obtain salvation through faith alone. This is not true. The word, "believeth" is a comprehensive term. It not only means that we must believe He exists; but that faith must motivate us to obey His teachings. What did Jesus teach? *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* His teaching not only includes what He said on the earth, but also what the apostles were moved by the Holy Spirit to say (**Jn. 16:13-14**). Friend, in order to be saved, you not only need to believe that Jesus is, but you need to obey His teaching (**Jas. 2:24; Heb. 11:6**)!

Some Simply Refuse To Come To Jesus (v. 17-21).

Jesus stated His mission in **John 3:17** (see **Lk. 19:10**). The light has come (**Jn. 8:12; 1 Jn. 1:5**), but men have refused (**Jn. 3:19**). Men refuse because they love the darkness, and will not come to Jesus. They would rather stay in ignorance and be lost, than to come to Christ, change for the better, and live. Some Christians are like this as well. They have been baptized, and feel like that is enough. They would rather be ignorant of God's word and then wish that they are pleasing to God.

The one that wants the truth will yield to Christ (**1 Jn. 1:7**). It is important that we understand God's word and obey it! We can have fellowship with God (and with one another) by walking in the light! While we are alive, we have time to make our lives right with God. If you need to submit to Jesus, believing in Him, and obeying His word, do not wait any longer! You need to believe that Jesus is, and be born again (**Mark 16:16**). Why wait? There is still hope while this world stands! (**II Cor. 6:2**)

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

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