

PTB2-24a: Jesus, Salvation, and the New Birth.

3 JESUS OF NAZARETH AND SALVATION .

If you wish to do some exegesis from Scriptures on the subject of CHRIST, it is almost impossible to take any passage of Scripture and not also discuss SALVATION. If you wish to do some exegesis from Scriptures on the subject of SALVATION, it is almost impossible at the same time not to discuss CHRIST. It seems that God wanted it that way in the writing of His book the Bible. I think that what we are really look at is that the life of Christ and God's provision of salvation for men is impossible. You know how often the Bible talks about man at Creation as being the "first Adam" and how likewise Christ is the Second Adam. The first Adam brought sin, death, alienations from God, and lack of salvation while the Second Adam, Christ, brought righteousness, life, restored fellowship with God, and provided eternal life through faith.

The First Sermon by the Apostle Peter after the Ascension of Christ back to heaven is typical of this pleasant exegesis of Bible passages. With our simplistic minds, we would like to utilize it to discuss what Christ is all about, or we would like to utilized it to discussion what salvation is all about. Yet it seems that we can not have one without the other, and that is the way it should be. Truth is a circle which spirals about the mind and character of God. You can not have one truth without the other, and one truth leads to another. We comprehend something of this in the famous teaching of Jesus about Himself as "the way, the truth, and the life."

Jesus said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." Jesus is the way to God the Father, to the Father's house of many mansions, to heaven and eternal life; Jesus is the very personification of truth – if you look at Jesus you look at salvation; and Jesus is the life – a more meaningful kingdom of Christ centered life now and an abundant eternal one for the future.

Peter starts this sermon with an explanation of the historical coming of the Holy Spirit in power on the earth by quoting these events of the First Day of Pentecost after the Ascension as the fulfillment of a prediction by the Prophet Joel in Joel 2:28-32. Granted that we normally like to latch onto the "end time" events in Joel 2 and Acts 2,1 would hope that we can more focus on the words of salvation. If you look at Acts 2:17-21 and Joel 2:28-32 as a survey of world history as God is making it – and indeed it is starting with the historical event of the Holy Spirit coming to take the place of Christ on earth and with great power all the way to the end of time with the "great and notable Day of the LORD" – then the longest period of time is the period referred to as "whosoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved".

"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

This is one verse of Acts 2:21 and of Joel 2:32. There is some additional information in Joel 2:32 that Acts 2 and the Apostle Peter do not quote. Joel 2:32 adds in that one verse that this salvation of God will come out of Jerusalem, and it adds that salvation will be for a remnant of Jews and Gentiles.

Now, at this point the Apostle Peter has the same pleasant dilemma that we have. Peter has explained what is happening on this first Day of Pentecost, but now he needs to explain specifically, as Joel does in 2:32, how salvation comes out of Jerusalem. How do you think Peter does that? Exactly Peter does it with an extensive discussion about who Jesus of Nazareth is. How quickly we pass from salvation to Jesus of Nazareth! And yet you will find that Peter's subsequent 18 verse explanation of who Jesus of Nazareth is also an explanation of salvation.

Let us look at those 18 verses as quickly as we can. First, a brief of what the 18 verse explanation of Jesus of Nazareth and the salvation of God contain: (1) First Peter sets forth his version of the Gospel of how Jesus of Nazareth was proven to them to be the Son of God by God the Father, how His purpose was to be delivered to death by crucifixion according to the plan of God, and how God raised Him from the dead; (2) Then Peter supports the fact of the resurrection with a quote from the Prophet David in Psalms 16:8-11; (3) Then there is an explanation by the Apostle

Peter of what the Prophet David has written, by the way we should know that this is part of the Bible training and understanding that Jesus imparted to Peter; (4) Then Peter transitions back to how David foretold the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ; (5) Peter transitions from the Ascension to the events of that morning (6) And then there is another quote from the Prophet David as recorded in Psalm 110:1 to reinforce these teachings about the Resurrection, Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit; and (7) Lastly the dynamic conclusion of Peter's message.

We will look at this six-point message as quickly as we can. The Apostle Peter would never make it as a good preacher in this day and time. Everyone knows that you should have either three points and a poem or you should have only a four-point message.

1. How impressive is Peter's version of the Gospel of Jesus. It within itself is a short message.
 - a. God approved Jesus of Nazareth, His work and His teachings, by the "miracles, wonders, and signs" that God gave Him to do. [A clue for Mark.]
 - b. The Great Maker of History, God Himself, determined according to His foreknowledge and purpose, that Christ would be delivered to Crucifixion.
 - c. This predestination of God did not eliminate the personal responsibility of the Jewish nation of their false accusations and their handing over Jesus for crucifixion by the Roman government.
 - d. God raised Jesus up from the dead. It was, according to Peter, impossible for God to do otherwise for His own Son. It was not possible that the very Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, should be held bondage by death itself.
2. The quote from the Prophet David of Psalms 16:8-11 proves that the Resurrection of Christ was part of the eternal plan of God. A person might casually read Psalms 16 thinking that David is only talking about himself and his own spiritual struggles and death; but it should become obvious to the reader when he comes to 16:10 that it is a discussion of the very Son of God.

What else could it be when you read in verse 10 about the "Holy One of Israel". Of Israel and of the world, there has always been

only ONE Holy One, one without sin and that is Christ. Okay, here is the quote from Psalms.

"I (recall that the I is really Jesus of Nazareth talking and thinking out loud)...I foresaw the LORD (LORD in capital letters like that is always God the Father)...I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

(You see how this is faith in God on the part of Jesus

Therefore, Jesus continues, my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For you will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow YOUR HOLY ONE to see corruption. You have made known to me the way of life; You will make me full of joy in Your Presence." (Acts 2:25-28 and Psalms 16:8-11)

3. Peter explains David. David is dead so that he could not be talking about himself, and further Peter says, his tomb is right here in Jerusalem with us. But you see that David was speaking as a Prophet, Peter and the Scripture call David a Prophet and that is how we know that He was. Prophets speak for God and foretell events. That is what the Prophet David did in Psalms 16:8-11 as he foretold the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter states in unmistakable terms that David wrote details of the resurrection of Jesus: (1) how God would not leave the soul of Jesus in Hades; and (2) how the body of Jesus after death would not see corruption. Then comes Peter's bottom line on the Resurrection: that God raised Him up from the dead, and how all the apostles and disciples saw exactly what happened. They saw Jesus of Nazareth dead and buried then on the third day they saw Jesus of Nazareth alive and well.

4. Truth gets in another circle here with the preaching of Peter as He explains how the Coming of the Holy Spirit relates to the Resurrected and Ascended Christ. It goes like this: (1) God had already promised the Holy Spirit to Jesus to take His place on earth, continue His work, and accomplish far more than Jesus alone could do – in fact you will recall that Jesus also passed this promise on to the disciples to encourage them as they all face the prospect of the cross together; (2) When Jesus Ascended back to the right hand of God the Father, He became the recipient of the promise; and (3) The Ascended Christ Himself sent the promise

of God from heaven to earth, that event was being sent with signs and wonders on the first day of Pentecost after the Resurrection.

5. Thus Peter has made a smooth transition from the Ascension of Christ to the very events of that morning. The tremendous sound from heaven like a mighty, rushing wind; the tongues of fire sitting on top of each of the eleven disciples; and the speaking in other languages from the Holy Spirit. (By the way we might believe as real the present-day attempt to imitate the speaking in real languages, if the same imitators could simulate the tremendous wind from heaven and the tongues on top of the speakers. They can not because those signs came from heaven, from God and Christ!)

6. The dynamic conclusion of Peter's Message.

a. Israel, you crucified Jesus of Nazareth; but God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. Christ was the understood Old Testament word for the Messiah, the provider of salvation; and Lord is the master.

b. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit was at work. The listeners said, "What can we do about it?"

c. Peter replied "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; then you too will receive this gift of the Holy Spirit. You must separate the gift of the Holy Spirit from the events of the historical coming of the Spirit. The gift is exactly that which Jesus detailed in John 14-16 while the peculiar events of that day is the sound, the cloven tongues, and the speaking in other languages.

d. Furthermore the baptism is not a baptism of water. It is the equivalent of the new birth and beyond. Notice the word is "be baptized" as something that is being done to you by the Spirit of God, not something you can do.

e. Peter goes back to salvation. Back to that part of Joel 2:32 that he was attempting to explain when He got off on a necessary discussion of who Jesus of Nazareth is. He says that the promise of God as

recorded in Joel 2:32, again in Acts 2:21, is a promise to three groups of people: (1) It is to the listeners on that day of Pentecost; (2) It is a promise to their children; (3) It is a promise to all subsequent history of peoples for as many as God Himself will call.

4 Traditionalism (FUNDAMENTALISTS) AND THE NEW BIRTH.

The subject is simple and straightforward: HOW THE FUNDAMENTALISTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE FALLING AWAY. Actually, there are many ways that the fundamentalists have contributed to the Falling Away; but this study from the Bible is on specifically HOW THE FUNDAMENTALISTS CONCEPT OF THE INSTANTANEOUS NEW BIRTH HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE FALLING AWAY. As a text we will look at one verse from Jesus' parable of the seed and the sower, Mark 4:16. [correlation with Mark should be from Mark 4, details of parable of the sower and maybe more]

"These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness." (Mark 4:16)

Now, look at that "with gladness". Matthew says, "receives it with joy". Now a fundamentalist with his "pick and chose" method of Bible study, if he noted the wording carefully at all, would say that this is instantaneous new birth. The hearer of the Word receives the seed of the word with gladness or joy. "That is salvation!" "That is instantaneous new birth." Well, we know better. We know from the explanation of Jesus that this is the Seed of the Word which falls on stony ground, but after a short period of time this so-called believer no longer endures. "After a while" are the words of Jesus to explain the short time this believer lasts after receiving the Word with great joy and exuberance, perhaps even shouting. Jesus further explains that when tribulation or persecution come on account of the Word, this person stumbles. Stumble is another word from the Falling Away. A lack of enduring is

another word for the Falling Away. You can see that it takes time for this would-be believer to intercept persecution and tribulation. But all during this time of persecution at work and at play, at large from the church, the fundamentalist churches are carrying him on the church roll as a born-again believer.

Let us briefly look at the facts of the New Birth as taught by Jesus and recorded in the third chapter of the Gospel of John. (1) There is a distinct difference between the physical birth and the new birth. Jesus said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This immediately separates Bible faith from the American Democratic Faith where everyone born in the United States is automatically by birth or by environmental influence a Christian like Prime Minister Begin expressed when he said "we Israelis are born Jews like you Americans are born Christians." Not so to be born and raised in America is only to be born and raised under the American Democratic Faith. It is a marvelous set of values, freedoms, and traditions; but it is not salvation, nor is it the birth of the Holy Spirit. (2) By comparing the spiritual or new birth to the physical birth, Jesus teaches us that it takes time to be born again just as it takes nine months to be born physically after the seed is implanted in the womb. That is the problem with the fundamentalists who are in reality traditionalists who have made a religion out of the traditions of the Scofield Reference Bible. They try to appear literal by saying "you must be born again"; but then they distort the original meaning by their doctrines and practices of instantaneous salvation or instantaneous new birth. They look at a person during a revival meeting or even in personal evangelism with their little equations for salvation; they see the seed fall among thorns or on stony ground; they see the immediate with joy springing up on the part of the hearer; and they say, "how marvelous is the work of God for a new soul has been born again." Not accessorially so; because the new birth just like the physical birth that Jesus compared it to takes time. Perhaps not nine months. Maybe longer or shorter; but there is some period of survival time from the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other things that the planted seed of faith must survive before it is a real new birth.

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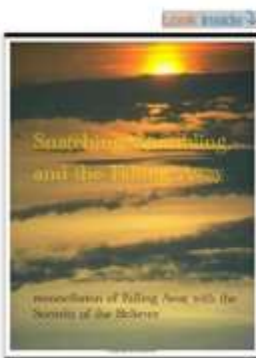
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