

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jehovah's Witnesses and Baptism

Years ago, brother Homer Hailey used to say that if you got into a study with a Jehovah's Witness, just focus in on the plan of salvation. If we could not agree on this, the rest did not matter anyway. While there is certainly a lot to differ with them on (i.e. the deity of Christ, the nature of the soul, the 144,000, the role of government, the eternal nature of hell, the future of this planet, the kingdom of God, blood transfusions, the return of Christ, the inspiration of The Watchtower, etc.), the older I get, the more I see the wisdom in what he had to say. Why study all these complicated subjects if we can not even agree of what one must do to be saved? Also, the Jehovah's Witnesses have a pre-schooled program and a string of arguments ready to discuss these subjects. However, off their pre-programmed arguments, they're like a fish out of water they do not know where to go or how to study from the word of God. A brief examination of their reasoning on baptism is certainly evidence of this.

If you ask a Jehovah's Witness what one must do to be saved, he cannot give you a direct answer. He simply does not know. Somewhere along the line, you just slide over the line from being lost to being saved; and where and how, he cannot explain. When you begin to study such passages as Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-7; 1 Peter 3:21, etc. with him, he will quickly agree with you that baptism is essential to salvation and that is what he believes and teaches. Yet, in the very next breath, he will tell you

God is more interested in the incentives of the heart than in the act itself (see Acts 10:1-2; Rom. 10:1-3 to reply to this reasoning). The bottom line is: He does not know what he believes on this subject!

The truth is that their publications teach exactly what the Baptists teach on baptism (Jehovah's Witnesses denials notwithstanding). They do believe baptism is "essential" for salvation, but not for the remission of sins! To them, it is the same as a faithful Christian attending church or partaking of the Lord's supper. A Christian must do these things to be saved (and faithful), but the act itself has nothing to do with forgiveness and becoming a Christian. But, a Jehovah's Witness will openly deny that this is what he believes! He only knows that he does believe baptism is "essential" to be saved but how is it "essential"? That is the question!

To clarify their real teaching on this subject, let us note a few statements from their own publications. In *The Truth That leads to Eternal Life*, they state: "When love for God moves you so that you want to do his will, then it is proper that you go to him in prayer. . . . It is appropriate that you tell Jehovah that you want to belong to him and that you want to do his will. . . . After you have made your dedication to Jehovah to do his will, he will expect you to keep it. . . . What, then does Christian baptism signify? **It is not a washing away of one's sins**, because cleansing from sin comes only through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7). Rather, it is a public demonstration, testifying that one has made a solemn dedication to Jehovah God and is presenting himself to do his will. . . . If you have made up your mind to serve Jehovah and want to be baptized, then make this known to the overseer of the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses with which you are associated. He will gladly assist you without any charge for the baptism" (pp. 182-194, emp. mine DPA). Again, in *New Creation*, they state: "The views of the `Disciples,' otherwise calling themselves "Christians' ... is that baptism (immersion water) is for the remission of sins. **We cannot accept this to be a correct view of baptism; to us it is neither scriptural nor reasonable. We cannot believe that the word has made the eternal welfare of our race dependent upon their**

knowledge of, and obedience to, any such institution" (p. 428, emp. mine DPA).

Certainly that ought to be adequate to clarify their position, but apparently they are still having problems explaining what they believe on it. In The Watchtower magazine (4-1-93), they carried an article entitled: "Baptize!" they ask: "Why did Jesus require that his disciples be baptized? Well, it was a fitting symbol of their whole-hearted dedication to God Are you one who has been associated with Jehovah's Witnesses for some time? Perhaps you have already made the necessary changes in your life in accordance with Bible principles but have not taken the steps of dedication and baptism. . . . There are many people who have taken in an accurate knowledge of the Bible but have not yet fully availed themselves of **God's provision for salvation by being baptized**.... A person who truly has such love and wants a special relationship with Jehovah God would not hold back from freely dedicating his life to him. Baptism is but an outward symbol of that dedication" (pp. 5-7, emp. mine DPA).

Then, in an attempt to explain baptism away and get around the passages that teach it is essential, they state: "The Scriptures do not support the widely held view that baptism is a sacrament, that is, a religious ceremony imparting merit, grace, holiness, or **spiritual benefit** to the one baptized... . Moreover, according to the Scriptures, **remission of sins comes only through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ**" (emphasis mine, DPA). This supposedly explains away such passages as Matthew 28:19. They then turn to Jesus and argue that baptism could have **nothing to do with the remission of sins**, because Jesus himself was baptized, yet he had no sin. Acts 22:16 is explained away with the statement 'by calling upon his name' in faith - Hebrews 9:22, 1 John 1:7." I wonder what had moved Saul to such repentance prior to Ananias even coming to him? 1 Peter 3:21 is explained away by stating, Noah "showing full faith in God built the ark for the preservation of his family (Heb. 11:7). Similarly, by exercising faith in Jehovah God... people today can be saved from this present wicked world. They must also act on that faith. By repenting of sins, turning around from a wrong course, and **making an unreserved dedication to Jehovah God**

in prayer, the request is made to God for a good conscience" (all emp. Mine DPA). Note how they completely skip over the mention of "water" and talk instead about the ark as the means God used "by faith" to save Noah and his family.

No, a J.W. does not believe baptism has a thing to do with one being saved (i.e.: forgiven of his sins) it is only "essential" as an act of dedication, showing we are already saved and want to do God's will. But, a J.W. will argue the point with you, and when finally forced to see their own statements in their own publications, will then turn around and argue one can be saved before and without baptism! Again, if we cannot agree on the subject of salvation, what difference do all those other doctrines make? If one is going to be lost for not obeying God's will to get rid of his sins, the rest doesn't matter! And if baptism is essential, then The Watchtower and their publications have published falsehood, and if that is so, they are not inspired! This, in turn, makes all the rest of their teachings suspect as well.

Jehovah's Witnesses need to see these points, then be challenged whether they will continue to follow teachers who are not teaching the truth of God's word on so vital a subject. If they will teach error on one point, can they not also be in error in these others points as well? At least one point has been established though, The Watchtower can no longer be held up as the infallible interpreter of the word of God!

- Donald P. Ames, Guardian of Truth, August 5, 1993

“It Was Donated By Individuals”

The New Testament does not authorize sharing common meals as part of a local church's collective function. To the contrary, 1 Corinthians 11:22 and 34 clearly assign that to the home, not the church. Additionally, Acts 2:46 illustrates that taking meals together was a "house to house" activity for first century Christians. If eating such meals is not part of our collective work, it

is obvious that a church providing facilities in which to eat is equally unauthorized. Renaming such facilities “fellowship halls” or “family life centers” instead of kitchens and dining halls changes nothing!

Many brethren who have these facilities and activities feel little need to justify them Biblically. Along with a host of other things unknown in the New Testament, they are swept in by the broom of attracting more people, good works, etc. Others, a bit more cautious about the necessity of Bible authority, offer various rationales. One I have heard of several times lately is this: the kitchen equipment was donated by individuals, not paid for from the church’s treasury.

This reminds me of an incident a number of years ago. A deacon and I went to see a woman who had visited our services. She was struck by the fact that we did not have instrumental music, assumed it was because we could not afford it, and offered to buy us a piano! We declined, of course, explaining the Biblical principles involved. But what if she had donated a piano? Would it have been okay to use it because it was not paid for out of the church’s treasury?

What is the practical difference between someone giving cash on a Sunday and the church going and buying a stove with it vs. that individual buying the stove and donating it to the church? Either way it is the church’s stove, to be used in its facility, in an activity advertised under its name, with the approval of its leaders, for the enjoyment of its members — an activity that is just as unauthorized as ever!

If several of our young mothers installed some playground equipment at the building, took turns watching each others’ children here all day, put a notice about it on the bulletin board, and invited others to drop off their kids as well, would anyone honestly try to say the church was not in the day care business simply because the equipment was not paid for out of the church’s treasury?

The hollowness of this rationalization ought to be self-evident. Such arguments would never be made if we would be content to live by Bible authority.

- Frank Himmel

- > "If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door."

 - > "Many of life's failures are experienced by people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." -*Thomas Edison*

 - > "I know for sure that what we dwell on is who we become."

 - > "In matters of judgment, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."

 - > "The elevator to success is out of order. You'll have to use the stairs . . . one step at a time."

 - > "If you want to test your memory, try to recall what you were worrying about one year ago today."
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Elders: Gordon Percell & Gary Smalley

Evangelist: Gary Smalley

Sunday AM: 9:30 & 10:30

Sunday PM: 5:00

Wednesday PM: 7:00



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)