

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Well Done Thou Good and Faithful Servant!

The words in the title of this article were spoken by our Lord as He taught a very important lesson to His disciples in Jerusalem. Many today have great hope, and think towards the day when they will hear Jesus say the very same words "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

The Day of Judgment is real and will take place just as it is written. Although many try to "guess" at exactly when that will be, it is unknown to man. Jesus said that information is reserved to the Father only. "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:31-33). Also in the same conversation with the disciples, Jesus directs them to take heed, watch, and pray, so that they will not be taken by surprise and be unprepared when the day comes, (a lesson for all to take seriously).

That day will be a time of joy for some, but for others, it will be devastating. For those who never believed in the Lord, it will be a day of belief. To those who have more important things to do than serving Him, they will realize that there was nothing more important than His work. For those who think the Bible is a book written by uninspired men of God, they will then realize that it contains the very Law to which they will be judged. God is not the author of confusion (1Cor. 14:33), and He is very clear with the message regarding the Day of Judgment. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:31-34).

Jesus told the disciples "In my Father's house are many mansions: ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." With these heavenly preparations being made, we too must diligently be preparing for that day. In the "Parable of the Talents" (Matt. 25:14-30), the Master teaches on how we can prepare ourselves for that great day. The parable begins saying that the Lord has gone away into a far country and left us with the responsibility of "holding down the fort" while He is away. All resources needed to be successful in this effort have been given to us. However, it depends on whether we choose to use our "talents" and "abilities" for the good of His cause. In the parable, Jesus describes three men who were given different amounts of talents, "And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey" (Matt. 25:15). Our Lord indicating here, even though people are different, everyone has something to offer when it comes to the work of the Lord.

Sadly though, there are those likened unto the one-talent man, afraid to use their God-given talents and abilities for the church. Jesus had prayed to the Father asking Him to "send more laborers" knowing how great the work was. It is such a tragedy today when one of God's children decides to withhold their abilities from Him. The Lord called the one-talent man who hid his talent "a wicked and slothful servant" and he was "cast into outer darkness."

Thankfully though, there are many who do choose to use their "talents" and "abilities" for God. These faithful and hard-working servants are examples for us to behold. They are those who we should continue to encourage and learn by their examples. We need to be preparing ourselves for that day of reckoning, so that as we stand before the Master, we WILL hear the words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

- Lenny Chapman

Christ is Reigning Now

God promised David that one of his descendants would set on his throne (2 Samuel 7:12-14). Then, God told David that He would "establish the throne of his kingdom forever." (Vs. 13) Thus, when David's descendant was on his throne, he would be on the throne of his kingdom, reigning over his kingdom. Isaiah repeated the promise in 2 Samuel 7:13 (Isaiah 9:6-7), and he likewise made it clear that when this One would be "upon the throne of David," he would also be "over His kingdom." The One who would be reigning upon David's throne would, at the same time, be reigning over His kingdom.

Jesus Christ was promised the throne of David (Luke 1:31-33) and was raised up to sit upon it (Acts 2:29-31). After He ascended into heaven, Jesus sat down on that throne (Hebrews 8:1; Revelation 3:21). We must, therefore, conclude that when Christ ascended, He sat down on the throne and began reigning over His kingdom.

At the same time He sat and ruled upon His throne, Christ would also be a priest (Zechariah 6:12-13). He became the high priest when He sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 8:1; 10:11-12). Furthermore, Christ was to receive the kingdom when He received dominion and glory (Daniel 7:13-14). He received dominion and glory when He went into heaven and sat down at God's right hand (1 Peter 3:22; Luke 24:26; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:21). Christ, therefore, began to reign over His kingdom when He ascended back to the Father and sat down on the throne.

Daniel saw a vision of the Christ coming in the clouds to the Ancient of days, and there was given to Him dominion, glory, and a kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). In one of His parables, Jesus said, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." (Luke 19:12) Thus, Jesus went in the clouds of heaven (His ascension); to a far country (heaven); came to the Ancient of days (the Father); and received dominion, the kingdom, and glory. He will return (the second coming) to render to all according to their works.

Some think that Christ could not have begun His reign after His ascension because He did not put down the wicked kingdoms. However, Christ hasn't yet conquered all His enemies because the day of His wrath hasn't yet come (Psalm 110:1-5; see also Psalm 2:7-12). In Acts 13:31-33, Paul confirmed that Psalm 2 refers to the reign of Christ. All those who do not willingly serve Christ are considered to be His enemies, and He will pour out His wrath on them at His second coming (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Now is the accepted time to take refuge in Christ, for a great day of wrath is coming (Romans 2:5). Christ will continue to reign until all His enemies are subdued. "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." (1 Corinthians 15:25) "... But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool." (Hebrews 10:12-13)

- David J. Riggs

The Conversion of Simon

When Philip went down to Samaria he found a sorcerer, Simon by name, who had bewitched the people for a long time with his sorcery. He succeeded in persuading the people that he was "some great one" and that he "had the power of God" But since He was nothing but a trickster and a faker, he readily saw that Phillip's miracles were genuine and, along with the Samaritans, he believed and was baptized.

Now, the question arises, was the conversion of Simon genuine and did he become a saved man, a child of God? Those who teach that it is impossible for a child of God to "fall from grace" declare that Simon was never truly converted and was not a child of God. This is an effort to defend a false doctrine in spite of the fact that this is a clear-cut example of a Christian's falling into condemnation. If this doctrine had never arisen, then the conversion of Simon would not have been called in question. But let us look at the divine record.

Luke declares, "But when they (Samaritans) believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women." (Acts 8:12). No one has ever questioned the conversion of the Samaritans or that they became children of God. But Luke further declares: "Then Simon himself believed ALSO and when he was baptized ..." (Acts 8:13). The key word in this passage is "also." "Simon himself believed also." The simple meaning is, Simon believed as the Samaritans believed. He believed WHAT they believed. His faith was like their faith and as genuine as their faith. His conversion was like their conversion. He obeyed the gospel just as the Samaritans obeyed the gospel. He "believed and was baptized," just as the Samaritans "believed and were baptized." Now, was Simon a saved man? Did he become a child of God?

If Simon was not a saved man, then Jesus did not keep His promise, for in Mk. 16:16, Jesus has said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." If Simon were not saved, then it was not Simon's fault, for he did exactly what the Lord commanded him to do. Also, if Simon was not saved, then neither were the Samaritans, for Simon did exactly what they did.

The truth of the matter is, Simon obeyed the gospel. (Rom. 1:16). He "believed and was baptized." Jesus declares that those who thus do, are saved. (Mk. 16:16).

— Lindsay A. Allen (1907-1999)

- "The man who does as he pleases, seldom pleases the Lord!"
 - "Always tell the truth and you do not have to remember what you say!"
 - "Many people have the right aim in life, but a lot of them never pull the trigger!"
 - "A "religion" that is not worth exporting, is not worth keeping at home!"
 - "A sound argument must have more than "sound" in it!"
 - "The future is "purchased" by the present!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"If ...!"* (Text: 2 Tim. 2:1-13); Sunday evening: *"Job's Wife!"* (Job 2:7-10).