

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Go Forward!

As the Israelites camped at Pi-Hahiroth near the Red Sea, they were horrified to look and see the approaching Egyptian army, bent on re-enslaving them. Moses, attempted to reassure the faithless Hebrews by telling them, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today" (Exod. 14:13). God, however, was not pleased with Moses' reply to the people, for he said to him: "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward." Moses lifted his rod, God parted the waters, and the Israelites went through "on dry ground" (v. 22).

Unfortunately, today many people still have the attitude of Moses of standing still and watching for the salvation of the Lord. They are unwilling to "go forward" as God commanded. This is true in many areas of religion today.

First, many people are unwilling to "go forward" when it comes to their own salvation. Numerous groups teach that "faith only" will save them from their sins. They "stand still" and wait to "see the salvation of the Lord." The Bible is clear that a man will not be saved by "faith only," by God's action without any effort on the part of the man. While it is true that nothing we could possibly do could save us without God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9), it is also true that God will not save us without obedience (Jas. 2:14-26). God's plan for salvation is so simple that even a child can understand it. Faith (Heb. 11:6), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession (Rom. 10:9-10), baptism (Acts 22:16), and perseverance (1 Cor. 15:58) are what God requires of us. Yet, so many people in the world today reject one or more of these things on some basis or another. But, all that amounts to is making excuses for not obeying God. We must ask ourselves, what if the Israelites at the Red Sea had said, "No, God, we don't think it's necessary to 'go forward' across the Red Sea. Instead, why don't you just destroy the Egyptians where they are?" Or perhaps they might have said, "God didn't really mean 'go forward' when he said 'go forward!'" Can there be any doubt as to what would have happened had the Israelites refused to obey the word of God and go forward? Yet, in effect, this is what people say to God every day when they refuse to obey the plan he has so simply laid out in his word! We must not reject the

gospel plan of salvation just because it might be inconvenient or troublesome for us to obey!

Second, many people in the church today are unwilling to "go forward" when it comes to the salvation of others through evangelism. I direct your attention to what Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). All too often Christians want to sit back and let the "full-time" preachers do all the preaching and teaching. Brethren, such should not be the case! We need to be like the early disciples who, due to persecution, were forced to leave Jerusalem, and "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Do we seriously think this refers only to "full-time" preachers? No, God expects all of us to teach others about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Perhaps part of the problem is that we have forgotten the reality of an eternal hell. Perhaps we have forgotten the fact that without obedience to Christ, men are destined to that hell (Jn. 14:6; Rev. 21:8). Perhaps we have forgotten that without teaching, men cannot know that they need to obey Christ. Perhaps the real problem is that we are unwilling to take the time, make the effort, and yes, sometimes bear the expense, to "go forward" and take the gospel where it needs to go: into all the world. If every Christian (men, women, everybody) would resolve to spend time every week studying his Bible (2 Tim. 2:15), and teaching others what he learns, we could fill our meeting houses and establish congregations in places which have never known a New Testament church! The church would grow and fill all the world, like God wants it to (Matt. 13:31-33). Unfortunately, all too many Christians, because of a lack of personal study, are like the Hebrews of old of whom God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). A greater misfortune is that souls by the thousands (yes, even by the millions!) are marching daily to eternal destruction and many Christians are unwilling to "go forward" to try to stop them!

The lesson of the Red Sea crossing is clear. God was not content to let the people just "stand still." Standing still produces stagnation in people . . . those who are not Christians are unwilling to do what is necessary to enter a relationship with God, those who are Christians are unwilling to do what God has commanded. Let us all resolve to "go forward" in regards to not only our own salvation, but also in regards to the salvation of our fellow man! Only when we do can we hope to be pleasing to him. Only then can we hope to inherit the promises he has promised.

- Steven Baxley, via Guardian of Truth, 01/21/1993

This Ezra

To some, it may appear as just another one of those long lists of names we find in the Bible. This particular list is at the beginning of the seventh chapter of Ezra. The list begins with Ezra and works his lineage back through sixteen names. The sixteenth name is "...Aaron the chief priest" (v. 5). I guess you could say that this is similar to the lists of "begats" we find in various places in the Bible --- only in reverse.

I suppose we would have to have the mind of God to understand all of the reasons why a list like this is in the Bible. Was it included to help to establish the "credentials" of Ezra? After all, if he could trace his lineage all the way back to Aaron, it would help to establish the fact that he did, indeed, have some credibility.

Were these names included merely to take up space? The obvious answer to that is, of course, an unqualified no!

I'd like to mention one thing that comes to my mind when I read the words "this Ezra." It helps to establish the fact that I am not reading a book of fairy tales, legends, fables, etc. It helps me to know that, when I read the Bible, I'm reading about real people, real places, real events, etc.

There is not a passage in my Bible (or yours) that begins, "A long time ago in a land far, far away..." Instead, when I am reading God's word, I am reading about many people whose names are found in history books. I am reading about events that those same history books verify as having taken place.

Consider the following passage as just one more example of this:

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2)

In these two short verses, there are five governmental officials named. Does the evidence of history tell us that these were real men? Yes! In these same verses, we read about six places (The Roman Empire is implied while the other five are named.) Did these places exist? Yes! In these same two verses, two religious leaders (besides John) are mentioned by name. Did they really live and did they serve in the capacity mentioned in Luke 3:2? Yes!

If all of this is true, why, then would I doubt that John lived? Why should I deny the evidence he presented about Jesus?

Why, in fact, should I deny or question the validity of anything I read in the Bible?

Two words --- "this Ezra" --- say to me, "You can trust your Bible."

- Jim Faughn

Ruined by a Lie

An unidentified driver got a surprise the night they decided to destroy Cody Lutz's giant snowman. Lutz, along with his sister and his fiancée, spent considerable time constructing the nine-foot tall snowman. Then someone thought it would be fun to mow down the gigantic structure with their vehicle. The next morning the tire tracks leading up to the Petersburg, KY residence were clear. Also clear was what the driver realized all too late the previous night: the core support for the snowman was a large tree stump (WXIX Cincinnati, Jan. 15, 2019).

There is little doubt that the vandal believed the snowperson was just snow. After all, it looked like snow. They must have thought that it would disintegrate like snow under the more substantial weight of a powerful vehicle. Surely, they believed it was, well, snow! They discovered the truth the hard way.

Sadly, and at a far greater cost, many in the religious world have placed their trust in a grace wrapped in a false gospel. It may look to them like biblical grace. They may have been convinced it was true grace. But someday the truth will be revealed that what they believed to be grace was wrapped in partial truths and full-fledged lies. Pray that it won't be too late!

- David Bragg

- > "Be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, longsuffering with the weak, and supportive to the strong - because someday in life you will have been all of these!"

- > "It doesn't take strength to hold a grudge; it takes strength to let go of one!"

- > "True integrity is shown by doing right when no one is looking!"

> "A nominal Christian (if such a term may be rightfully employed) is one who follows Jesus so long as the Master's teachings do not infringe upon his life's practices!"

> "Learn from others' mistakes; you can't live long enough to make them all yourself!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Yoke of Christ!*" (Text: Matt. 11:28-30);
Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*