

## SUNDAY, THE DAY CHRISTIANS MEET FOR WORSHIP

The writer of Psalms very properly said, "*Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He Who hath made us, and not us ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture*" (100:3). Paul added, "*For in him we live, and move, and have our being*" (Acts 17:28). Being our Creator, Sustainer, and the Provider of eternal blessings, God is certainly due and worthy of worship.

Prior to Israel leaving their Egyptian bondage, however, (about 1500 B.C.) worship of God was an individual and family affair. The sabbath as a day of rest and worship was never observed until Israel became a nation, and it was then given specifically to them alone and to none others. It was no doubt given by God as a symbol of His day of rest in creation (Gen. 2:2, Ex. 20:11), but there is no Scriptural record of its observance during the next 2,500 years. The sabbath was observed for 1,500 years by Israel and then ceased when Israel had served its purpose in bringing forth the Messiah (Heb. 8:7-13, Gal. 3:19, 24-25).

Through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, His church was purchased and came into existence - the fulfillment of God's purpose since creation and the final period of the ages. Intending that they constitute a spiritual kingdom, Jesus' disciples were directed in preparing for collective worship. Just prior to His death, He assured them that He would be present with them when they assembled to observe the communion (Mat. 26:29, Luke 22:16).

But Jesus' church was not limited to the Israelites as were God's people during that past era, nor was it subject to observance of the sabbath. His people in the New Testament era were to offer themselves as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1) in contrast to dead animal sacrifices under the Old Testament. Christ's kingdom encompassed all peoples and assembled together on an entirely different day - the first day of the week, termed by us in this modern age as Sunday.

Evidence of this day of assembly and worship among early Christians is found in the inspired writings of the Bible. Luke records in Acts 20:7, "*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*" This reference clearly indicates that the disciples at Troas had an understood practice of meeting for the

communion on the first day of the week. Jesus had said, as we earlier noted, that He would be with them as they thus communed in His kingdom.

In his instructions to the brethren at Corinth , as he had already instructed those in Galatia , Paul referred to their day of assembly. "*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come*" (1 Cor. 16:2). The wording suggests an understanding that these congregations would already have known to assemble on the first day of the week. In view of their customary assembling on this day, Paul suggests that they take advantage of their expected assembly to make their contribution at that time. That Jesus arose on the first day of the week makes this day especially appropriate upon which to commemorate His sacrifice, which makes possible our Christian service and hope. These two passages show the first day of the week observance by the early church. Other historians, though uninspired but who wrote shortly after the First Century, confirm observance of the first day of the week.

"They ceased to keep the sabbath and lived by the Lord's day on which our life as well as theirs show forth, thanks to Him and His death, though some deny this."  
(*Ignatius, Letter to the Magnesians, Chapter 9*)

"On every Lord's day, His special day, come together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure." (*The Didache 14:1, Second Century*)

"And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those that live in the city or the country."  
(Justin Martyr (150 A.D.), *First Apology, Page 67*)

"On the Lord's Day all Christians in the city or country meet together, because that is the day of our Lord's resurrection." (Justin Martyr (150 A.D.), *Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Volume 1, Page 135 (A. G. Hobbs)*)

Although the Christian assembly on the first day of the week was an evident and approved practice among the early disciples, it appears that some in that day, even as in our day, failed to be diligent in their respect for Jesus and His grand gift. They were exhorted, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*" (Heb.10:25). In view of all the wonderful blessings which are

extended to us by a gracious God, surely we could honor Him by spending a few hours on the first day of each week in assembling with the saints for a period of praise, remembrance, and worship.

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## APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Could you explain the command that Paul gives when he says, "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*" (Col. 3:1)? How do we obey this command?

ANSWER: Anytime we study a verse it must be studied in its context. By context we have reference to the relation of the specific statement to the letter in which it is found. Many times we have difficulty with verses because we do not take the time to establish the context and read the verse accordingly. This we will do with the verse under consideration.

The epistle to the Colossians is a general epistle written by Paul to remind the Church of the sufficiency of Christ for their life. Paul in the first chapter begins by acknowledging their faith in Christ and commends them for it. He ties their faith to the hope that all saints possess.

Paul continues in the first chapter by drawing attention to the preeminence of Christ. He teaches us that Jesus is the image of the invisible God and that He is the source of all things and that all things were created for Him. (Col. 1:16) He is the source of salvation and reconciliation. Consequently He is worth dedicating our life in service to Him.

The second chapter is written as a warning. Just as there are many dangerous doctrines prevalent today, so it was in Paul's day. The Colossian Church was a Roman city and had to contend with the culture of its time. There was always the danger (just as it is today) of the saints being robbed of their inheritance by exchanging the truth of God for the lie. Paul warns them of the philosophies of men and the danger of legalism. This strikes a blow at both the pagan and Jewish belief systems common to that time. His message is simple. If Christ is preeminent and sufficient, there is no room for man's philosophy or legalistic thinking immersed in the traditions of men. Christ is all we need!

Having reminded us that Christ is all-sufficient in matters of salvation and overcoming sin we enter chapter three. This chapter gives for us the basics of being a new creature. He reminds us that now that we are Christians we are to grow in Christ-likeness. Keep in mind that growth is a process and not an event. Consequently there are things that we must put off and things that must be put on.

The verse we examine (Col. 3:1) begins with the phrase, *"If then you were raised with Christ"*. The context for this phrase is found in Col. 2:11-12. Paul writes,

*"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism in which you also were raised with Him through the operation of faith, in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."*

A sister passage to this verse is found in Rom. 6:1-4. Note the similarity between the two passages.

*"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

Both passages remind us that our baptism was an act of faith wherein we were buried with Christ and raised a new creature in the sight of God. We were raised with Christ, with God having forgiven all our trespasses and sins that were against us.

It is from these teachings that Paul makes his point. He begins by saying, if you were raised with Christ. That is, if you were buried with Him in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life, then our life should be different. The way we live in Christ is different than the way we lived in our sin. But in what way is it different? That is what chapter three is all about.

The first thing Paul points out is the subject under consideration in this article, *"seeking those things that are above"*. In order to understand what is meant by this phrase, one must look at verse two. Here Paul writes,

*"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."*  
Col. 3:2

Consequently in answer to the original inquiry, we would respond by saying that seeking those things above is equivalent to setting our minds on the spiritual and not the earthly. It means that as new creatures in Christ, our mind-set must change. Before obeying the Gospel we were in sin and were driven by things fleshly. We lived to please the flesh. But as Paul reminds, if we seek to please the flesh we cannot please God. The flesh is enmity against the spirit and therefore must be brought into subjection.

It is interesting to note that Paul creates a link between our new lives in Christ with changing the way we think. This is consistent with what we know about change. True transformation begins first in the heart. Paul in his epistle to the Church in Rome wrote,

*"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* (Rom. 12:1-2)

The goal of the Christian life is Christ-likeness (see *The Harvester*: June 2006). Transformation must begin first in the mind. We "seek those things above" by directing our attention on things spiritual. In Philippians chapter four, Paul outlines the strategy that we must pursue for growth as a child of God. He writes,

*"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."* (Phi. 4:8-9)

We are to possess this new way of thinking because we have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). This occurred when we were baptized into Christ. Through our baptism we are crucified with Him. Thus we are free from sin and now live with Christ. This involves us walking in newness of life. Our life is hidden in Christ. Paul told the Galatians,

*"I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)*

By giving ourselves to Him, we have denied self, crucified self, and are free to allow Christ to live in us. That is what Paul meant when we said that we are dead and our life is hidden in Him.

At this point it is important to note that while we are new creatures in Him, we are left to deal with the sinful habits and mind-set that developed before we gave ourselves to Him. We must become in essence what we are in being. God did not, when we were baptized, remove all of the sinful practices that the flesh had developed prior to becoming a Christian. This is the basis for the struggle that we often find ourselves in. Note Romans chapter 7.

*"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate that I do. If then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." ( Rom. 7:15-20)*

While there are a great number of spiritual truths captured in the above passage, we give notice to the last phrase that sin dwells in us. It is this sin that dwells in us that Paul tells us in Colossians we must mortify or kill. This is the practical aspect of living a life in Christ. As we grow in Christ we are to slay the sin that is in us. This involves the put-off and put-on dynamic mentioned earlier in this article.

The connection of proper thinking to proper living is of utmost importance. Transformation must begin in the heart of man. Immersing ourselves in the Word and allowing it to work in our hearts changes our hearts. This is why Paul tells us to seek those things above!

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# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
August 3 – 6	Van Lear Congregation Van Lear, KY	Bobby Golson (Prattville, AL)
August 4 – 6	New Bethel Congregation Cullman, AL	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 4 – 6	Willow Creek Congregation Auburn, AL	Bill Prince, Jr. (Oxford, AL)
August 5 Study on Elders	West Broad Street Congregation Wedowee, AL	Various Speakers
August 13 – 20 Series on Revelation	Dowell Hill Congregation Columbus, IN	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
August 18 – 20	Mt. Carmel Road Congregation Gay, GA	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
August 18 – 20	Pleasant Ridge Congregation Woodbury, TN	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
August 25 – 27	Valley Congregation Valley, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
August 28 – Sept. 1	Mt. Zion Congregation Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. How many camels did Abraham's servant take in his search for Isaac's wife? TEN (Gen. 24:10)
2. When Paul was at Troas , a man in a dream asked him to come to what country to help them? MACEDONIA (Acts 16:9)
3. What would the Psalmist be if God could wash him? WHITER THAN SNOW (Psa. 51:7)

4. What common fate do man and beast have, according to Ecclesiastes? DEATH (Eccl. 3:19)
5. What did Job take to scrape himself with when he was afflicted with boils? POTSHERD OR A PIECE OF BROKEN POTTERY (Job 2:8)