

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

A Sad Occasion

By Micky Galloway

In Kentucky, where I was reared in a small town, funerals are a sobering and somber time of reflection on the reality of death and a life that has passed. It is a time when the community pauses to honor the fallen and the family that grieves. As the funeral procession slowly passes down the street toward the cemetery, with headlights on, drivers respectfully pull their cars over to the side of the road and stop until the procession passes.

As I reflect upon the many funerals I have assisted with over the years and others I have attended, there is a passage I do not recall ever being read at a funeral. *“And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity”* (Eccl. 8:10, KJV). The wisdom writer speaks of the death of the wicked.

The “Grim Reaper,” death, is indeed busy. Funeral homes are not in want for business. It is not a pleasant task to preach a funeral for many reasons, yet some funerals are worse than others.

Without doubt the best situation is that in which the person who has passed away has been a solid and faithful child of God. This provides hope for the deceased and comfort for those who loved him and mourn his passing (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13ff). Death is a happy occasion for one who is a Christian. The Scriptures teach, *“Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints”* (Psa. 116:15). *“A (good) name is better than precious oil; and the day of death, than the day of one’s birth”* (Eccl. 7:1). John wrote, *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord”* (Rev. 14:13).

It is always hard to preach a funeral for one who has never become a Christian. What can be said? Years ago when I lived in Arkansas an older lady who had recently obeyed the gospel lost her son in an automobile accident. She had studied for a long time and knew the truth well. She said to me, “Micky, he’s gone and he wasn’t a Christian.” My heart ached for her and her family because there were no true words of comfort, no magic words to be offered to ease the burden of her loss. Paul spoke of the condition of the Gentiles before their obedience to the gospel, *“that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world”* (Eph. 2:12). To comfort those in Thessalonica, Paul wrote, *“But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope”* (1 Thess. 4:13). It is a sad occasion to preach the funeral of one who has never obeyed the gospel, one who has never enjoyed the blessings that are offered *“in Christ”* (Eph. 1:3), one who dies with no hope.

However, the worst, the most difficult, the most futile, and despairing circumstance of all is to try to preach the funeral of one who is an erring child of God, one who has known and obeyed the truth and then has made shipwreck of the faith. Paul charged Timothy to *“war the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme”* (1 Tim. 1:18-20). The Hebrew writer spoke of such in Hebrews 6:4-6, *“For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and (then) fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”* It is a sad occasion indeed, when one who has known the way of truth, one who has experienced the blessings *“in Christ,”* one who has enjoyed the hope of eternal life, turns from it and then passes from this life into eternity unprepared.

We know that those who die apart from the Lord are cursed. *“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matt. 25:41).

In our text, the writer contemplates the burial of the wicked. *“And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and*

gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city...” (Eccl. 8:10, KJV). There is a solemn warning in this verse, for he says that this wicked one who was buried **“had come and gone from the place of the holy.”** He had been seen coming and going from the temple, the house of prayer, in the same way as the just and holy. Adam Clarke suggests these were, “... *either as kings or priests to God; and, not having fulfilled the holy office in a holy way, have been carried to their graves without lamentation, and lie among the dead without remembrance*” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary*, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996 by BibleSoft).

This one came and went, and went just as he came. He was not any better, for he was buried as a wicked person. How sad it is for one to come and go, having gone through the motions of communing with the Lord, singing songs of praise to God and praying. These come and go to the place where saints meet worshipping God, but thinking that their faithfulness is evidenced by coming and going, as if to say that is all that is needed or required.

Think about it brethren. Unless our “coming” is genuinely motivated out of love and fear for God, our “going” will take us out of this life to share eternity in the company of the wicked! – *Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin*, April 22, 2018. ■

5 Views of Baptism: What View Do You Hold?

By Steve J. Wallace

Jesus stated nearly 2000 years ago, **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mk. 16:16). To the simple, unbiased and unprejudiced mind, Jesus’ statement is very clear and easy to understand. It is as easy to understand a doctor’s statement, *“He who eats his food and digests it will live; but he who does not eat will die.”* All of us would easily understand that unless we eat and digest, we will die! However, for those who have allied themselves with human creeds and have been depraved with worldly wisdom, Jesus’ simple statement becomes confusing and contradicting. Although the Bible ALWAYS places water baptism (in Jesus’ name) before salvation, men have sought ways to undermine His authority and confuse the simplicity of our Lord’s teaching.

ATHEIST’S VIEW: For example, the Atheist would say, **“He who believes and is baptized will NOT be saved.”** He has rejected the existence of God and the authority of the Bible. Unbelievers believe there is no God, yet one would have to be “God” himself to prove such a position. For one to know that there is no God, he would have had to have been everywhere, seen everything at once and know all things! Yet Jesus had him in mind when he said, **“...he who believes not shall be condemned,”** and again, **“...he who does not believe is condemned already”** (Jn. 3:18). Truly **“the fool has said in his heart ‘There is no God’”** (Psa.14:1).

UNIVERSALIST’S VIEW: The Universalist approaches the scripture with the bias that God is a God of only love and therefore He can never condemn anyone. They say, “He who believes NOT and is NOT baptized shall be saved.” While such a faith accepts the actuality of God, it rejects His word and leaves, nonetheless, a corrupt and misguided picture of Deity. Warning! **“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day”** (Jn. 12:48).

CATHOLIC’S VIEW: The Catholic comes along and teaches, “He who believes NOT and is baptized shall be saved.” I say this as a former Catholic who was sprinkled as a baby. Catholics baptize babies because of the erroneous view of inherited sin (Ezek. 18:20); however, Bible baptism was NEVER administered to babies. Jesus taught that babies are safe (Lk. 18:15-17). Notwithstanding, subjects of Bible baptism must have first believed (see again Mark 16:16), yet faith comes by hearing the word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17). How can a baby believe when they cannot understand the word of the Lord? Can they also confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37)? False doctrine makes us believe unbelievable things!

PROTESTANT’S VIEW: Then the Baptist comes and says, “He who believes and is NOT baptized shall be saved.” Yet is this what Jesus said? Is it Deity’s view? No amount of human manipulation will change the eternal truth of Mark 16:16. Beware all of these “NOTS” are formulated by men in the devil’s “tale” to cheat your soul!

JESUS’ VIEW: **He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mk. 16:16). – *Collegue church of Christ Bulletin*, March 16, 2014. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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