

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Man, the Plan, and the People

P. J. Casebolt

Recently, the idea has been advanced (again) that we are not saved by any “plan” of salvation, but rather by a “man.” I am thankful that this doctrine has received its just recompense of attention, and that several writers (including some editors) have paid their respects to it in an uncompromising fashion. That we are saved by both *the Man* (Jesus), and *the plan* (the gospel), is most clearly shown in the second chapter of Acts. Peter preached the Man (vv. 22-36), and the plan (vv. 37-40), and when 3000 believed on *the Man* and obeyed *the plan* they became the people of God (vv. 41- 47).

Is the doctrine that we are not saved by a plan deserving of so much attention? I think that it is. That is why I say that this theory has been advanced “again,” because it had its inception in sectarianism, and gives life to that system. It is the old theory that we are saved by “faith alone” in a new dress. Some brethren cannot recognize the change of clothing.

The People of God

The danger lies in the ultimate conclusion we must reach if we contend that salvation can be obtained without obedience to a plan. If it is true that we are saved by faith alone in the Man Jesus, then the distinction between those who are God’s people and those who are not becomes obscure indeed. If obedience to specific commands is not required, then anyone claiming to believe in Jesus Christ must be acknowledged as a child of God. This would admit the devil himself (Matt. 4:1-11).

Does God have a people? If so, then all people are not God’s people. There must, then, be some means of determining who God’s people are, and there must be some means of separating them from those who are not God’s people. Concerning those who had been called out of darkness, Peter said, **“Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”** (1 Peter 2:9, 10). God does have a special people. We must identify them.

The Separator

In the judgment, Jesus will act as the separator, placing God’s people on the right, and those who are not God’s people on the left (Matt. 25:32, 33). This separation will be determined by the word of God, for Jesus said, **“. . . the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”** (John 12:48). The only way of identifying God’s people, as nearly as it is humanly possible to do so, is to measure them by the same word that will separate them in judgment. This brings us to another question.

How does God go about letting people know that he wants them to be his? How are his people called out from among those who are not his people? Paul says we are called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14.) Jesus draws people by the gospel (John 12:32). Those that come to Jesus are drawn by teaching, hearing, and learning (John 6:44, 45). The gospel is God’s separator.

From Darkness to Light

The process of distinguishing God’s people from those who are not is just as simple as distinguishing darkness from light. Of course, if people have allowed the God of this world to blind their minds, they may not be able to tell darkness from light (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). That is why so many people in darkness think they are in the light. Paul says we are translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. (Col. 1:13). Find

out how we get into the kingdom, and you will find out how we become God's people. Jesus says we must be ***“born of water and of the Spirit”*** (John 3:5). If we have not been born again, we are not in the kingdom; if we are not in the kingdom, we are in darkness; if we are in darkness, we are not God’s people.

When We have Obeyed

We become servants of righteousness when we have obeyed (Rom. 6:16-18). When we believe the facts of the gospel, and obey the commands of the gospel we are dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6: 11). Baptism is one of the commands of the gospel, and at the time we are baptized the transition takes place from the old life to the new (Rom. 6:35). No baptism, no new life; no new life, no scriptural claim to being a child of God.

Christ the Way

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). We are told to put on Christ (Rom. 13:14). Believers put Christ on in baptism (Gal. 3:26, 27). We are baptized into Christ, and all spiritual blessings are in Him (Eph. 1: 3). Those who have not been baptized are not in Christ and have no access to spiritual blessings. We may as well contend that we are saved without Christ the Man as to contend that we are saved without baptism, for baptism puts us into Christ. If we do not believe the part of the gospel that says baptism puts us into the family of God, we have no grounds for believing the part of the gospel that says faith in Christ is essential. If we can not believe all of the gospel, we can not believe any of it.

Where Are God’s People?

God’s people are in the body of Christ—in fact, they are the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13, 27.) God’s people are referred to as a kingdom, a flock, a bride, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. Does God have people scattered throughout sectarianism, identified with the systems of men? If so, it is because they have departed from the faith and have affiliated themselves with the unfruitful works of darkness. Obedience to the gospel never put anyone into sectarianism, and those who are in that system cannot afford to be found there at death or the judgment. True, some who were once God’s children will be lost in eternity, but it is just as true that those who never were God’s children will also be lost (1 Peter 4:17, 18.)

What Shall We Say Then?

Let Peter say it: ***“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”*** (1 Peter 1:2). God has a people. They have obeyed the commands that separate them from those who are not God’s people. Call it what you like—legalism, Phariseeism, or anything else—it is still the truth. The real “legalist” is the one who will try to legalize what God has outlawed; the real Pharisee is the one who places more emphasis on the traditions and opinions of men than on the commands of Christ. The Man Jesus gave the plan of salvation, and we must obey it to become God’s people. — ***Truth Magazine***, May 27, 1971. ■

The Church Is Sufficient

By James P. Miller

As a result of having the whole council of God preached by Paul, the church of Ephesus was in the unity of the faith (see Eph. 4:1-6). This gave them all that they needed to do anything that the Lord wanted done. They were completely independent spiritually from everything else on earth. They looked to no school, paper, or center or influence. They were not a part of any super organization that exercised control over them. God needs no unit larger than the local congregation to do his work. The local church is sufficient; it is all-sufficient! ■

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

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