

# The Reflector

PUBLISHED IN THE INTEREST OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEETING AT

1460 NORTH MAIN

VIDOR, TEXAS

Volume 41

May 2005

Number 5

## THE THIEF ON THE CROSS-!

One of the most common arguments made against baptism being necessary for salvation is by making an appeal to the **“thief on the cross.”** It is argued that the thief was not baptized and yet was still saved. It is true that this thief was saved; Jesus said to him: **“Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.”** (Luke 23:39-43) But whether or not this thief was baptized is not known. It is a dangerous proposition to take a position based upon a mere assumption. The fact is the thief did not need to be baptized because the Law of Moses was still in force and baptism is a part of the New Covenant, not the Old. He never heard the command to be **“baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”** because this message was not preached until the Day of Pentecost by Peter and the thief had already died by this time. A better argument could be made for the possibility that the thief had been baptized than that he hadn't. But again the law under which he lived and died did not require baptism in order to be saved. The New Covenant, which is God's law for all mankind today, requires that a person be baptized in order to have their sins forgiven. (Acts 2:38 & Acts 22:16) And Jesus said the following in Mark 16:16: **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”** Just do what Jesus said in this verse and you will be saved. At least that's what Jesus said about the matter. Do you believe Him?

## ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S BIBLE QUESTIONS:

Psalms 136 is the chapter in the Bible that is 26 verses long and each verse ends with the statement ***“for His mercy endureth forever.”***

Hymenaeus and Philetas are the two men who were guilty of false teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead. They were teaching that the resurrection had already taken place, which of course was not true. (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:15-18)

## QUESTIONS FOR THIS MONTH:

What Old Testament king had a golden image erected and required his citizens to worship that image? (What were the dimensions of that image and what three men refused to bow down to the image? What happened to these three men?)

What two persons appeared with Jesus when He was transfigured before His disciples? (What did these persons talk about?)

### “HEAR YE HIM!”

When Jesus was transfigured before His disciples in Matthew 17:1-5, God the Father spoke from heaven and said the following: ***“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased; hear ye Him.”*** In Deuteronomy 18:18-19, Moses prophesied about a prophet that would arise like unto himself, and how it would be necessary for the people to hear and do what that prophet would say. According to the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:19-26, that prophet was Jesus. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said the following: ***“All power/authority hath been given unto me, in heaven and on earth.”*** According to Ephesians 1:19-23, Jesus was given to be ***“head over all things to the church.”*** Therefore who will we listen to today, Moses or Jesus? When people practice tithing today, they are listening to Moses rather than Jesus. When people use mechanical instruments of music in their worship today, they are listening to Moses instead of Jesus. Moses himself said that anyone who would not listen to that prophet that God would raise in his place, would be cut off from the people; in other words cut off from God. (Acts 3:22-23)

## **“BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH!”**

Through the years I have heard some people say that we are saved **“by God’s grace alone.”** Others have said that we are saved **“by faith alone.”** Neither one of these statements is true. What is true is that we are **“saved by grace through faith.”** This is what Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2:8. Grace involves everything that God has done for mankind making it possible for us to be saved. On the other hand, faith involves everything that man must do in response to God’s grace. Everyone has the possibility of being saved because the **“grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men.”** (Titus 2:11) The apostle John says the following in 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:4: **“...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”** He does not however say **“faith only.”** God’s grace is defined by the statement of Romans 5:8 which says: **“But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”** Paul said the following in Galatians 5:6: **“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”** But Jesus said in John 14:15 **“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** And so **“saving faith”**, which is the kind of faith spoken of in Ephesians 2:8, is an **“obedient faith.”** That is why Paul said in Romans 16:25-26 that the gospel was made known to all nations **“for the obedience of faith.”** Believing in Jesus only is not the same as **“saving faith.”** According to John 1:10-12, believing in Jesus only gives a person the **“right to become a child of God”**; it does not within itself make one a Christian. Agrippa was a believer according to Paul, but Agrippa was not a Christian. (Acts 26:26-29)

And so, if you wish to be saved, then you must gain access to God’s grace, which according to Paul comes only through an obedient faith. It is not **“faith separate and apart from obedience”**, but rather an **“obedient faith.”** This is why we read such statements in the Bible as Hebrews 5:9 which says: **“And being made perfect, He (Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.”**