

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby we
may edify
one
another.

John 8:32 And
ye shall know
the truth and
the truth shall
make you free.

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

July
3
2016

HOW GREAT IS OUR INDEPENDENCE?

Jim Stauffer

Our nation celebrates its independence from the King of England each year at this time. It was formally proclaimed in the document, The Declaration of Independence. This document stated the Thirteen Colonies were legally separated from Great Britain. This independent state made certain the colonies were no longer subject to the laws and edicts of the King of England. They were free from that tyranny and rule. It was and continues to be a source of happiness to the citizens of those thirteen colonies that have now grown to the 50 United States of America.

Believe it or not there is a greater independence man can know than that aforementioned freedom. Jesus told those who had believed Him they would be His disciples and know the truth to be set free by it if they would abide in His words (**John 8:31,32**).

Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah in **Luke 4:18**, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised.* In verse 21 of the same text He identifies Himself as the One sent by the Lord for this task. It is important for us to recognize Jesus' work was directed to the spiritual needs of mankind and not just his temporal health. Yes, He healed sick people, revived the dead and caused the blind to see. But in each case He taught the lesson of spiritual health and life free from sin. He explains this concept as He eats with publicans and sinners. **Matt. 9:11** *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners? 12 But when he heard it, he said, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. 13 But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice: for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*

The bondage to sin was overcome by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ that destroyed the bonds of death Satan held man in because of his sin. **Heb. 2:14** *Since then the children are sharers in flesh*

and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (cf. Rom. 6:23)

This bondage is self imposed as we yield to our own lusts. **James 1:13** *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: 14 but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.* Paul says we choose either to serve *sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness. (Rom. 6:16)*

Paul said changing from sin to righteousness requires obedience. Paul, himself, was told by Ananias to *arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16)* We too, if we are to be changed from sinner to servant of righteousness must do so by way of obedience.

Jesus has promised to be the cure for the ills of sin, but He also demands our obedience to become righteous and to serve righteousness. He told His disciples to *preach the gospel to every creature, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that disbelieveth shall be condemned. (Mk. 16:15,16)* The Hebrew writer tells us Jesus was completed or made perfect in His suffering and as a result, *became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:9).*

To have spiritual independence means freedom from sin. **John 8:24** *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

Much like our nation, we must choose independence and it must mean enough for us to make the necessary sacrifices and many did at that time giving their lives to achieve it. May we do likewise for our spiritual independence from sin and death.

OT PASSAGES IN MATTHEW 2 # 3

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more" (Matthew 2:16-18). In a fit of anger, Herod massacred all the male babies in Bethlehem. Since Bethlehem was only five miles from Jerusalem, one wonders if Herod could hear the anguished cries of mothers and fathers as their sons were murdered. While the *"kings of the earth"* set themselves against the Lord's anointed (**Psalm 2:2**), the King in heaven could easily laugh at Herod, holding him *"in derision"* (**Psalm 2:4**). Still, this occasion was that of sadness and mourning. That is what **Matthew 2:18**, a quotation from **Jeremiah 31:15**, speaks of. What was Jeremiah speaking of; why did Matthew use this OT passage?

After her death, Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob *"was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)"* (**Genesis 35:19**). Obviously, there would have been much mourning and sorrow when this loved one died. Jeremiah wrote during the impending captivity of Judah, soon to be taken into Babylonian exile for seventy years (**Jeremiah 25:11**). The prophet said that Rachel cries out for their plight. Is Rachel the idealized mother of the Jews? Ramah (three mi. north of Jerusalem; some locate Ramah NW of the Sea of Galilee, cf. **Jeremiah 40:1**) was the staging area for captives; here they waited until transported to Babylon. God's people were being punished; they would soon leave their cherished land.

Why did Matthew use this passage from Jeremiah? Was it because Rachel's death was associated with Bethlehem and then the babies in this town were slaughtered? Could it be, that even though the babies were killed, one baby, Jesus, escaped King Herod's rage; thus, mankind would subsequently be blessed by Jesus, the ultimate king. There was mourning in Judah because of their captivity. Yet, Jeremiah speaks to a time beyond and after the Babylonian captivity. *"They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn....Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD"* (**Jeremiah 31:9, 20**).

Rachel's weeping anticipated Judah's return from Babylon; the palpable sorrow in the camp gave way to future hope. The Lord would bring forth a new covenant—a relationship with God for all was now possible. God would have mercy on His Son Ephraim (all of God's people). Captivity would end. A new day would come. The restoration of Israel was near. Why? Because Jesus, the Messiah, Immanuel, God with us is alive! Babylonian exile and Herod's sword brought sadness and sorrow. But Jesus brings hope and release for all.

Randy Harshbarger

JESUS, A MAN APPROVED OF GOD BY SIGNS AND WONDERS

Christianity is no mere philosophical view of life but a system of redemption grounded and validated in miraculous deeds.

In George MacDonald's novel, *The Curate of Glaston*, Thomas Wingfold, the Anglican preacher in the small village of Glaston, was a preacher with no real conviction about the message he preached. In his journey to faith, which the story recounts, there comes a point where he asks the question which is eventually asked by all who seriously ponder the validity of Christianity: "why should the weight of the story...rest upon...miracles?" (67).

The relevance of this question is evident for at least two reasons. First, there's the fact that Christianity is the only religion that bases itself upon the occurrence of certain historical events. If these happened, Christianity is validated; if they didn't, it is worthless (**1 Corinthians 15:12-19**). Second, is the claim that Christianity's foundational events are miraculous (supernatural) in nature. But to note this still begs the question as to why "the weight of the story should rest upon miracles." For an answer, I would ask you to consider the Old Testament accounts of Gideon (**Jdgs. 6**) and **Elijah (1 Kgs. 18)**. Gideon recognized how easy it is to deceive oneself in matters of subjective religious assurance. To ensure that he wasn't engaged in an act of self-delusion, he sought objective evidence from God by which he could know that the Lord really intended to use him to deliver Israel from the enemy. And God complied, not once, but twice. First, the dew fell on Gideon's fleece, but not on the surrounding ground; then the dew fell on the ground, but not on the fleece. Here's how J.W. Montgomery explained the point: "Gideon, like any spatio-temporally bound member of the human race, was incapable of knowing by subjective, existential immediacy that the voice within him was God's voice; yet he had to know, for the lives of others as well as his own safety depended upon his ability to make a true religious judgment. In this

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quandary, God provided Gideon with external evidence--in concrete, empirical terms--showing that it was indeed He who spoke within Gideon's heart" (The Suicide of Christian Theology, Bethany Fellowship 1971, 343).

On Mount Carmel, Elijah faced the problem of conflicting religious claims. Since the prophets of Baal said one thing and he said another, how were the people to know who (if either) was telling the truth? The solution was an objective test. "So Elijah gave the false prophets the opportunity to demonstrate the 'reality' of their god through his ability to perform an act of divine power on earth. The inability of the false prophets' truth-claim to hold up under such a test (fire from heaven, 1 Kgs. 18:24), when coupled with Yahweh's positive response to the identical test, provided the needed ground for belief in the true God" (ibid).

In the New Testament, the situation is no different. How were people to know which men claiming to speak for God actually spoke for God? More specifically, how were people to know that Jesus of Nazareth was who He claimed to be; namely, Emmanuel, God with us? Here's how: *"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know"* (Acts 2:22). Miracles were the means by which God chose to *"approve"* (point out, show off, demonstrate) Jesus as His Son. Their suitability as a means to this end is obvious. There are some things men cannot do. Therefore, if a man appears doing what men cannot do, it is reasonable to believe that something "super" human is at work (Jno. 3:2). And speaking for myself, any man who can cure the incurable (Matt. 8: 3), stop the unstoppable (Matt. 8:26), predict the unpredictable (Matt. 17:27), do what can't be done (Matt. 14:25), and raise the dead (Matt. 9:25), is one to whom I'm going to listen.

Very simply, a miracle is an extraordinary event that could never have occurred without special divine intervention. Some of the salient characteristics of Christ's miracles have been aptly summarized by Norman Geisler in his work Signs and Wonders (Tyndale House 1988).

Their extent included power over every disease and demon (Matt. 4:23,24) over nature (for example, Matt. 21:18-20), and raising the dead (Jno. 11:43,44). They were always successful. The results were immediate. No one Jesus healed ever suffered a relapse. They confirmed Jesus and His message as God's Son (Jno. 10:36-38).

God never performed miracles arbitrarily, but always purposefully. And His most singular purpose was that miracles confirmed (authenticated) some individual as His spokesman or representative (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3,4; see Exo. 4:5). Through the means of objective, historical, verifiable miracles Jesus was *"designated beyond all question the Son of God"* (Ro. 1:4, Barclay).

Had He not done what no one else ever did, we would be justified in ignoring His claims to deity (Jno. 15:24). But in doing what mere man can never do, He removed every excuse for unbelief.

We need always, therefore, to remember "that to hold aloof from Christianity is not simply rejecting some creed, or system of opinion, it is rejecting Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God, the Savior of men" (John Broadus, Jesus of Nazareth, Baker 1962, 104-05). When fully impressed with the unparalleled magnitude of Christ's miraculous power (Matt. 9:33), we will have all the proof we need of His identity, and will marvel and confess, *"What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!"*? (Matt. 8:27).

By Kenny Chumbley in Biblical Insights, Vol. 4, No. 10, Oct. 2004

Have You Got The Tools?

I have been trying for the last year to set up a small woodworking shop in my garage, simply as a hobby. I am finding out rather quickly that one can invest quite a bit of money into obtaining the tools to do a job properly. I am also discovering that having a tool is no substitute for knowing how to use it properly in order to obtain good results. Here, as in all endeavors, experience matters.

In our Christian walk we are also in need of tools and equipment. "What do we do to handle this situation?" "What is the best response to persecution?" "How does God want me to think?" Unlike my woodworking shop there is no earthly price placed on the tools required for the job at hand. All the tools for the job have been provided by the Master. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16, *"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."* There is no good work to be done that the scriptures do not adequately equip us to do. The only thing the Christian must do to use these tools is to know that they are there for his use and that the Master INTENDS for him to use those tools. If we trust our Master, and if we are willing to use the tools provided in the manner intended, then we can be assured of pleasing our Master. These tools can be misused to our own destruction, just like any other tool. Peter wrote that scripture can be *"wrested"*, that is, twisted out of proper and intended shape, (2 Peter 3:16).

Cleveland Reddinger, El Dorado church of Christ

Eph. 4:11 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

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NEWS AND NOTES:

J.R. DANIEL, GRANT CLOTHIER
AND JAN PATRICK ARE IN NEED
OF PRAYERS AND VISITS.

CHARLES AND MARIANNA MILES
WERE BLESSED (AS WERE WE,
THEIR BRETHREN) WITH THE
BIRTH OF MADISON RAYNA
MILES SUNDAY NIGHT. THANKS
TO GOD FOR SUCH BLESSINGS.

BIBLE CLASSES: SUNDAY - A
STUDY OF PRAYER - TEACHER -
RON PECK, WEDNESDAY - THE
BOOK OF JAMES - JOE HURD
TEACHER



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10