

Christians with No Denominational Ties

God places great emphasis on names. He changed Abram's name to Abraham (Gen. 17:5), Sarai's name to Sarah (Gen. 17:15), and Jacob's name to Israel (Gen. 32:38). He gave to John and Jesus their names before they were born (Luke 1:13,31). He has given to His people of this age the name "Christian" (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). He has given no sectarian or denominational names, but rather condemns them (1 Cor. 1:10-13). The great need of our day is for men and women to forsake their denominational ties, be nothing but Christians, and call themselves "Christians," with no other religious names.

It is of interest to note that leaders in the prominent denominations, including some of their founders, recognized and preached this truth. N. B. Hardeman, in his *Tabernacle Sermons* (Volume IV, pages 216, 217), gives quotes from Charles Spurgeon, Martin Luther, and John Wesley in which they plead for unity.

Charles Spurgeon, a prominent Baptist preacher, is quoted as saying: "I look forward, with pleasure, to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the Baptist name will soon perish; but let Christ's name endure forever." (*Spurgeon's Memorial Library*, Vol. I, page 168).

The quote from Martin Luther: "I pray you to leave my name alone, and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone. St. Paul would not let any call themselves after Paul, nor of Peter, but of Christ. How then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of God? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions: away with them all; and let us call ourselves only Christians after Him from whom our doctrine comes." (*The Life of Luther*, by Stork, page 289).

Brother Hardeman's quote from John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church: "Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot; that we might all agree to sit down together as humble, loving disciples at the feet of a common Master, to hear His words, to imbibe His spirit, and to transcribe His life into ours."

We cannot help but wonder what changes would have taken place in religious history had the followers of these men heeded their pleas. The pleas, however, went unheeded. Denominationalism with its religious division exists and will continue to exist until our Lord comes to "root it up" (Matt. 15:13). But meanwhile, no one has to be a part of the denominational system; no one should be a part of it. Today, one can be just a Christian—as was Paul, or Peter, or James, or John with membership in nothing but a local church made up of other Christians. Faithful churches of Christ, with no denominational affiliations, meet throughout the world.

- by Bill Hall

Raised Before Buried?

I have asked this question before, but I want to ask it again. Did Jesus' resurrection occur before He was buried? Before you think I have completely lost all sense of sanity, you need to understand that millions of people, maybe even you, appear to believe that is what happened. Let me explain.

Romans 6:4 says, "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." Note the comparison between Christ and us. "That just as Christ...even so we also." What happened to Christ? "Raised from the dead." What parallels that for us? "Walk in newness of life." What events preceded those? For Christ, His burial. For us, baptism. Now if we can have "newness of life" BEFORE baptism, as many teach and believe, then, to maintain the parallel, you must believe Christ was raised before He was buried. "Absurd," you say. I know! That is why I teach baptism is essential to be saved, to become a Christian.

- by Ronny E. Hinds

All Sins Are Not Equal

We understand that there is not a 'ranking system' for sins. By this we mean that no sin is worse than another in regards to the damning effect on the soul. One sin, any sin, for which there is no repentance/forgiveness leads to eternal loss. So, in this sense, all sins are equal.

However, this view of things is too simplistic. Some sins are worse than others in regards to the progression that follows. Some types of sin are likely to lead to other sins, and – while noting the eternal consequences of all sins – there are immediate 'this world' costs associated with particular sins. For instance, theft often leads to the sin of lying to cover up the initial wrong. Or, for example, viewing pornography almost always results in an addiction that leads to more immorality. Horrible and devastating things can result from these sorts of sin.

We grow weary of some (including some of our own brethren) who attempt to make arguments of 'moral equivalence' relative to some sins. We've heard them say: "Drinking alcohol is no different than overeating." Really!?! Have you known of anyone who abused or neglected their family, lost their job, or fell under the influence of evil people because they ate one too many donuts?

We offer no justification here for overeating. We understand that it is an issue that affects many of us. Certainly lots of Christians have health issues associated with this problem. But, seriously, if the best argument that can be offered in defense of drinking alcohol is: "I may drink a little, but you eat too much" – then we conclude that the drinking folks have no solid ground to stand on.

Bottom line, we should never try to justify one fault by pointing to a different fault in others. Paul said it this way: "We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Cor. 10:12). Think!

- by Greg Gwin