

# A Prepared Heart

The Scriptures say, "And Ezra prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." (Ezra 7:10). This verse is actually a summary of Ezra's life and purpose. He was determined to fully accept the Lord's direction in life. This desire came from deep conviction and reverence for God. This led Ezra to seek out the Lord's will in His revealed Word, the Scriptures.

Some complain that the Lord's will

is too difficult to understand. But others, like Ezra, have had no problem in understanding it. There is a whole list of just plain, regular folks in Rom. 16 who all understood it quite well. Timothy is said to have understood it from a child.

The fact is, Jesus said that some would never understand. But it was not because of a lack of ability but rather a lack of will. They have unprepared hearts. To understand, Jesus insisted that one must desire to have God in his or her life.

He or she must be willing to open eyes, ears and heart.

The parable of the sower sowing seed is a case in point, well illustrating how important it is for us to prepare our hearts to understand and receive the words of Christ (Matt. 13:3-9; 18-23). One who is unwilling will often complain it is just too difficult to understand, but Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15). ~

[Author unknown]

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre.  
Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Navarre church of Christ  
8490 James M Harvell Rd  
Navarre, FL 32566

Place  
Stamp  
Here

### Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible Class for all ages\_9:00 AM  
Morning Worship Service\_10:00 AM  
Evening Worship Service\_6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages\_7:00 PM

### VISITORS ARE WELCOME!

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# NAVARRE MESSENGER

# What is the CHURCH *of* CHRIST ? ||

[Continued from last issue]

How Does the Church of Christ Relate to this Division?

In early America, different religious leaders arose in diverse parts of pioneer days, that were appalled by the division around the world. They realized that believers could never be united as long as human creeds, traditions and superstitions existed. These men began to raise a plea for the complete abandonment of human creeds, with a return to New Tes-

tament Christianity. Rather than reform denominations, they suggested a restoration of the New Testament church in the twentieth century! Among these leaders were Alexander and Thomas Campbell, immigrants from Scotland. As they began to preach a restoration to New Testament Christianity, other men (independent from the Campbells) were teaching the same thing by tossing out the creeds and accepting the Bible as the sole guide of faith and practice in religion. Reacting to this message with fervor,

many thousands responded to this pure Bible teaching. Just as recorded in the Book of Acts, men and women in America were baptized upon repentance and confession of their faith in Jesus and were added to the Lord's church. The church of Christ, identical to the faith and practice of the New Testament church, exists throughout the world today as it did in the days of the apostles.

Historical Lineage for Churches of Christ

No one who understands the Bible makes the claim for authentication of modern churches of Christ by a historical, unbroken link that connects back to Jerusalem. It cannot be done, historically, nor is it necessary that it be done to recognize the Lord's church today. How is it valid, then, for us to claim spiritual identity as the church of Christ without this link? What right do we have to say that we belong, spiritually and organically, to the Lord's church?

First of all, Jesus taught the validity of New Testament Christianity for all ages when he gave the "Great Commission" (Mt. 28:18-20). The gospel was to be for "the whole world" until the "end of the ages." The gospel is for all ages of time, for all nations, for every tribe, for every tongue. Faithful men in the first century were instructed to teach future generations (2 Tim. 2:2).

As the gospel of Christ is proclaimed in its purity, without the addition of creeds (Gal. 1:6-9), its simple message (1 Cor. 1:19-2:13) becomes the "power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Within the gospel is a divine power that is called "the seed" (Luke 8:1-15) by which spiritual life is generated in every age, wherever the gospel is proclaimed. No self-appointed clergy has the right to reject those who do not recognize their ecclesiastical oversight. Jesus is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23), and it is His right to determine who is saved and who is in His fellowship. The power of the gospel, the seed (Lk. 8:11) generates life wherever it is sown. Disciples are made when they obey the gospel (Mt. 28:18-20) and the Lord adds them to His

church (Acts 2:47). As individual saints are born by the word, they meet with other saints in a locality in order to work and worship as New Testament Christians did. In this fashion, wherever the gospel is preached, churches of Christ will appear.

#### The Church of Christ

A local church of Christ is simply a congregation that belongs to Christ. It is organized after the New Testament pattern of "elders, deacons and saints" (Phil. 1:1). All creeds of men are rejected and the Bible is the only standard of faith and practice. As the gospel is planted in the hearts of honest men and women (Luke 8:11; Rom. 1:16), new Christians are born (John 3:1-5; Rom. 6:1-7). Upon the instructions of the New Testament, Christians meet on the Lord's day for the Lord's supper (Mt. 26:26-30; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-29), singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), prayers (Acts 12:5), study of the scriptures (Acts 15:7-21) and giving contributions for the Lord's work (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Each congregation is independent from every other congregation, claiming its autonomy under Christ (Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). It recognizes no earthly head, belongs to no association of churches, stands free from denominational churches and supports no human institutions.

It recognizes its God-given responsibility to preach the gospel according to its own ability, to provide edification to its own members, and to provide benevolence for its own needy (Acts 6) and for those saints in need in

other places (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8, 9).

As the early disciples "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4), so do 20th Century Christians. Please consider the following material as a short explanation of God's instructions to man for Salvation. It is important we answer through scripture what God requires of us that we might be saved.

How Does One Become a Christian?

#### Hear the Gospel

Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). The Lord is inviting you into His kingdom. He also said, "I am the good shepherd," and he is the "door of the sheep" (John 10:7, 11). He invites the lost into the fold of safety, for danger is outside. For the lost, Jesus is the good shepherd that leaves the "ninety and nine" and looks for the "sheep that is lost," for "the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Mt. 18:11-14). Jesus' sheep hear his voice and follow him (John 10:27-28) for eternal life. How do the sheep hear the voice of Jesus? We are "called by the gospel" (2 Thes. 2:14), which is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). It is by the word of God that faith is produced in the hearts of the lost (Rom. 10:17). Have you heard the gospel?

Believe

As the gospel story is read

(Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Jesus is shown to be the Son of God (Jn. 20:27-31). Our faith rests in Him. We must believe that He is the Son of God, sacrificed for our sins (Mt. 16:13-16; John 8:24). Do you believe?

#### Repent of Sins

All of us have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and have died spiritually because of sin (Rom 6:23). We must face our sins and repent. Repentance is a change of mind, followed by a change of life, as illustrated in Matthew 21:28-31. The son "repented" (changed his mind) and "went" (changed his life). This repentance is required before one can be saved (Lk. 13:3-5; Acts 2:36-38). Have you repented?

#### Confess the Name of Jesus

Jesus warned that we must have the courage of our faith to openly confess Him with the mouth, an oral confession (Rom. 10:10). If we do not have this courage, Jesus will not confess our name as brethren (Mt. 10:32-33). People in the New Testament times confessed Jesus' name (Acts 4:10-12; 8:37). Have you confessed that Jesus is the Son of God?

#### Be Baptized

Yes, baptism is a Bible doctrine, commanded by Jesus (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Luke 24:48). Baptism is not administered as a "rite of the church," as a work of human righteousness or merit, but as an act of faith (Mk. 16:16; James 2:17, 18, 20, 24). Regardless of the animosity toward baptism in the denominational world, and in spite of their denial of its place in salvation, it is adminis-

tered by the authority of Jesus for the remission of sin.

Baptism is a burial (Rom. 6:1-7; Col. 2:12) in water (Jno. 3:1-5; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:38). It is for (unto, toward) the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and is viewed in scripture as involved in "washing away sins" (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). It is understood by Bible students that forgiveness is not in the water, but in the blood of Christ (Mt. 26:26-28; Rom. 6:1-7). However, Jesus has placed the opportunity of reaching that blood in the act of baptism. It is at baptism that the sinner meets the blood of Christ, that the old man of sin dies, and the new birth takes place (Rom. 6:1-7; Jn. 3:1-5).

Baptism is a re-enactment by the sinner of what Jesus did for him (death, burial and resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:1-4). The sinner obeys, in baptism, a "form of the gospel" (Rom. 6:16-18) in that he becomes dead to sin as he repents, is buried in baptism, and arises to a new life in Christ (Rom., 6:1-7). There is no other act of obedience in the New Testament that so fittingly portrays the gospel in our life as baptism. It is an act of faithful obedience (Rom. 1:5; Jn. 6:28-29; 8:39), not an act of merit or of human righteousness (Tit. 3:5). At the time of baptism, Jesus forgives our sins by the power of the blood and adds us to His church (Acts 2:38, 47). Have you been baptized?

#### Now That I'm A Christian

Disciples of Jesus wear no denominational names or support denominational doctrines. You are not Baptist, Methodist, Catholic,

etc. No such names or denominations existed when Jesus built His church, and you now belong to that church (Mt. 16:18; Acts 2:47). The name of "Christian" is given for you to wear, and you glorify God in that name (Acts 11:26; 4:12; 1 Pet. 4:14-15).

As a Christian, you will meet with other Christians for worship and service (Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42; 9:26-28; Eph. 4:11-16).

Christians begin as "babes" in Christ, having been born again (Jn. 3:1-5; Rom. 6:1-7; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; 1 Pet. 2:1-2). Each grows toward being a mature Christian (Eph. 4:11-15). They no longer live in sinful life-styles as in the past (Col. 3:1-17; Gal. 5:19-24). A Christian grows by adding the attributes of grace (2 Pet. 1:2-11).

Are you a Christian? ~

Eph 3:10-11 NKJV to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, (11) according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,