

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Church Northrop

Another way to ask this question is “What is the purpose of life? In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon considers life from two perspectives. First, he looks at life from the perspective of humanity without God. Ecclesiastes 1:4-7 says,

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.”

In this passage, Solomon views man’s labor “under the sun” (that is life from a physical viewpoint without the spiritual and without God). Thus, life is seen as one generation after another and like the sun, the wind, and the rivers laboring to get nowhere. The conclusion of such a view of life is “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (Ecc. 1:2). In other words, life has no meaning without God!

Second, Solomon views humanity from the perspective of life with God. When you put God back into your view of life, life takes meaning and the elements of life take on new meaning. For example, a part of life is death and, now, death has value (Ecc. 7:1-4). Death seen from the perspective of life without God is hopelessness, but death seen in view of God has tremendous hope. Death is the great deliberator for it causes us to soberly consider what is really important in life. Death is the great equalizer for we bring nothing into this world and it is certain that we take nothing out. And death is the great separator, for by death we are separated from this present world.

After examining life from both perspectives, Solomon concludes his analysis. In Ecc. 12:13 he wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” The very essence of the purpose of mankind is briefly but explicitly stated - “fear God and keep His commandments.” This is the purpose of life. This is why we are here. It is a terrible tragedy to spend one’s life like the sun, the wind, and the rivers in seemingly endless labors in this physical world. We must look beyond this physical realm to realms above wherein is God.

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GOTH Buster Dobbs

A new sub-culture is attracting the foundation-less. Evolutionism and agnostic teachers have laughed the one true, invisible, eternal, living God out of their existence. **The Bible is not a light to their way and they walk in darkness.** They dress in black, pierce everything, and revel in Gothic music (an offshoot of punk rock). Bars catering to confused teens of Goth persuasion are found in Manhattan, Boulder, Charlotte, Indianapolis, and Tulsa. They yearn to be vampires (and many claim they are) and have a suicide fantasy. In many places there are Live Action Role-Playing Games (LARPs). More than 3,000 people play every Friday night, according to the *Seattle Times*. They turn parking lots, city parks, and living rooms into stages for these games, filling roles such as “vampire” and “fallen angel.”

Police in Bellevue, Washington charged a 17-year-old-self-styled Goth, Alex Baranyi, with four counts of first-degree murder; they say he killed an entire family. His actions have been linked to his obsession with a vampire role-playing game.

Young people must have something in which to believe. How sad it is that our nation and especially our educational institutions are failing the young by systematically robbing them of an opportunity to know about the Bible, God, love, service and salvation. Government has joined hands with the ACLU and many public schools to destroy faith in Christ. *Firm Foundation, Bx 69, Houston, TX*

WHAT BAPTISM PLEASURES GOD?

Ted J. Clarke

One cannot successfully deny that baptism (immersion in water in the name of Christ) is to be performed on believing penitents in order to receive “remission (forgiveness) of sins” (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21). The apostle Peter made that plain in Acts 2. The Lord Himself said to Saul of Tarsus, you will be “told what you must do” (Acts 9:6) and that included “arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16).

Some voices among us are contending that one does not have to know why the Lord commands us to be baptized, as long as one does it “to obey or to please God.” The book, *Rebaptism?: What One Must Know To Be Born Again*, by Jimmy Allen of Harding University promotes such a view. A large part of Allen’s book is given to quoting what restoration leaders taught on this subject, and really that is the only type of authority to which he can appeal, for the New Testament knows nothing of such a view. We do not establish the truth of God’s word by counting the numbers of people who believe something. We will consider briefly Allen’s two main arguments.

First, brother Allen says Jesus is our example and He was baptized “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:13-17). He equates this to mean that as long as we are baptized to obey or please God, our baptism is acceptable whether or not we know the specific reason of obtaining remission of sins (*Rebaptism*, pp. 44-48). One must ask, “Do we fulfill all righteousness when we do not do what God said for the purpose He states?” The answer is No! Here is a fatal flaw in Allen’s thinking. Jesus had no sins to be forgiven and He knew precisely why He was to be baptized and so stated! If we do not know why we are to be baptized, we are not really following Christ’s example. Christ sent the Holy Spirit to inspire the apostles to state precisely why penitent believers are required to be baptized (John 16:13; Acts 2:38).

Second, Allen says that there are many reasons for being baptized and we cannot expect one who initially comes to Christ to know them all. Thus, he claims one’s baptism is not invalid if one does not know baptism is in order to receive forgiveness of sins. However, Allen admits one must be immersed, it must be in the name of Christ, and one must do this to obey God. If one can be taught these items, why cannot the same person be taught to be baptized to receive remission of sins? *Continued*

Here is another problem for Allen. If one can be baptized simply to please God, why does one have to understand baptism is immersion? Why does Allen not accept those who have had water sprinkled or poured upon them, as long as they did so to please God? Because he knows that baptism specifically means immersion. But in like manner, Peter specifically gives “remission

of sins” as the leading design or purpose for being baptized in the first gospel sermon (Acts 2:38). If people are taught the same gospel message Peter preached, and there is no other gospel (Galatians 1:6-9), they will be taught that baptism is “for the remission of sins.” For further study see Owen D. Olbricht, *Baptism: New Birth or Empty Ritual?* (Delight, AR - Gospel Light Co. 1994).

WHAT CAN A WOMAN DO?

Bryan Hodge

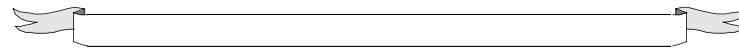
So much emphasis is given to what a woman’s role is not in the church, that we sometimes fail to teach what a woman can do. Consider the following:

1. A woman can do good deeds unto others. She can make



TAKE NOTE

Hard-core video rentals rose from 75 million in 1985 to 90 million in 1992. The total climbed to 665 million in 1996 (*U.S. News & World Report*, Feb. 10, 1997). Beloved take a stand against sin, now!!!



- garments for others as Dorcas did (Acts 9:36,39).
2. A woman can teach her children about God and His Son. Lois and Eunice did (2 Tim. 1:5).
 3. A woman can teach by way of example (I Pet. 3:1-ff).
 4. A woman can instruct a man privately in a non-authoritative manner (Acts 18:26).
 5. A woman can teach other women. In fact, such is commanded (Tit. 2:3-5).

There are many things that a woman can and must do. The church is blessed when it has Godly women fulfilling those roles which they can do. (*Rt 4, Bx 152X Savannah, TN 38372*)

WRONG ORDERS

Jim E. Waldron

Several years ago there was a disastrous train wreck in New York State. The engineer whose train had caused the catastrophe was found alive, but pinned under his engine. In great agony he took a piece of yellow paper from his pocket and thrust it out to his would-be rescuers saying, “**Take this, it will show I was given the wrong orders.**” Just so, many people are going to go before the judgement bar of God saying, “I was given the wrong orders.”

The scriptures plainly show that we must all stand before the judgement seat of Christ; even as it is written, “For we must all be made manifest before the judgement seat of Christ: that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad (II Cor. 5:10), and again “for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of God” (Rom. 14:10).

Many leaders of the people who mold public opinion in religion, politics, science and education, who feel like God will reward them at judgement for their good service to humanity are going to be sadly disappointed because their service has been according to their own will or their own traditions, or erroneous philosophy. For God’s word says, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:21-23).

Leaders in religion bear a heavy responsibility to God for the things they teach; for God’s word warns “Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgement” (Jas. 3:1). Religious leaders who have saddled the Christian faith with vain traditions that adulterate its purity and simplicity rest under a curse (Gal. 1:7-9). In other words, the masses who have been led astray with human creed books, hierarchical system, false baptisms and superstitious rituals that have no authority in the word of God are going to face God and cry we were given the wrong orders. Some often excuse themselves by saying, “It is not my fault if my preacher is wrong,” but God’s word says, “**If the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit**” (Matt. 15:14).

Let faithful men of God everywhere reject the vain traditions of men and give the right orders to a lost and dying world.