

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

ESTABLISHED 1786

MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

July 1969

BY: C. D. COLE

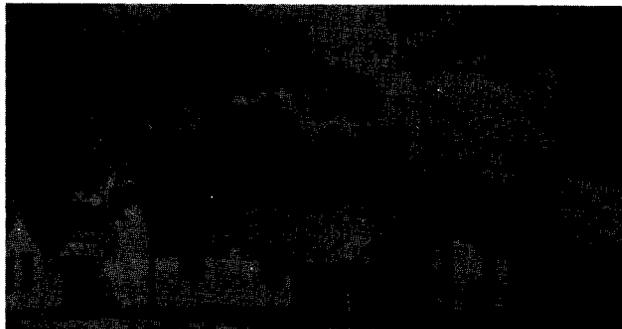
"And the same time there arose no small stir about that way" (Acts 19:23).

The early Christians--the early believers and followers of Jesus Christ--were known as "the people of that way." In the year 36, the Sanhedrin issued a commission to Saul of Tarsus authorizing him to arrest any whom he might find "of the way, whether they were men or women, and to bring them bound unto Jerusalem." When Paul preached in Ephesus in the synagogue for three months, we read that when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, Paul left the synagogue and began to preach in the schoolroom of Tyrannus. In the year 58, the same Saul (now Paul the apostle), made a defense from the steps of the Castel of Antonia, in which he said, "I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women" (Acts 22:4). Our Indian brethren call

themselves the people of the Jesus way. And that is a significant name for followers of Jesus.

The question has often been raised as to whether Christianity is dogma or life. But reduced to its final analysis and represented by its simplest terms, Christianity is neither dogma nor life, it is a way--the way from sin into the kingdom of God. Its bedrock and pavement is Jesus of Nazareth who declared Himself to be the way, as well as the truth and the life.

1. It is a plain way. The prophet predicted it when he said, "A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

- Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
- Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
- Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned Nursery Provided

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therein" (Isaiah 35:8). Nevertheless, to the lost man, the most bewildering of all questions is this: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Dr. David James Burrell once received a letter from a man of affairs who said: "All my life I have been an attendant at church; I would like to be a Christian, but I confess that I have never yet learned how to set about it." And this might be the honest confession of many.

In this message I want to make the way of salvation plain--so plain that any sinner taught of God will understand it; and yet so profound that any other sinner, of any age, who is not taught of God, will not be able to understand it.

2. Becoming a Christian is not the result of any magic formula of priest or preacher. There are no mechanics in the matter of being saved. In becoming a Christian there is a mental and heart experience. It is internal and not external. No geographical spot where you can go will make you a Christian. Salvation is not in a place but in a person. In salvation only one thing is needful and that is faith in a certain person, and the person is Jesus Christ. But before we come to that, we must touch upon a matter of preliminary importance. A man must repent before he believes, and he will repent before he believes--if he ever believes.

Now repentance is not a saving grace; it has value only as it leads on to something else--even faith in Christ. In the moral and spiritual realm, in human experience in salvation, repentance is what pain is in a physical malady. Pain has not a curative quality, but it is pain that causes the patient to ring the doctor's bell. So John the Baptist went before Christ saying, "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." By this he meant to tell them they are sinners, lost and in need of a Saviour, and their repentance would be the pain of realizing they were lost. It is a change of mind towards God about sin--such a change of mind that involves pain. But to amplify further:

1. In repentance there is an apprehension of sin as a fact. A calamitous fact, a dangerous fact, involving an adequate penalty. If God is a ruler, judge and hates sin, what would you think would be a just and adequate penalty? A man who is trying to explain away Hell and the unquenchable fire and the worm that dieth not is not a penitent.

2. In repentance sin is recognized as a concrete or personal fact. It is not enough to acknowledge that sin is in the world. I must recognize that sin is in me. When David had committed adultery with Bath-sheba, he said in Psalm 51:1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions, (Verse 4) "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight". David had always known in general terms that adultery was sinful--a fearful thing--but when it pointed its gaunt finger at him in the watches of the night and hissed, "Bath-sheba" it brought him to his knees. He was penitent and cried for mercy.

3. This penitence must be followed by a hatred of sin and the desire to forsake it. One turns away from sin in his heart as a loathsome thing. In repentance the

sinner is filled with horror over his mislived past. The man who is satisfied with his past life before God is not a penitent. He is self-righteous.

Now we come to the one thing needful. Suppose a disturbed penitent asks me what he must do to be saved, what shall I answer him? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." This is the whole answer and the only answer. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Jesus resorted to the kindergarten method, using an object lesson: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15).

But what is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Right here comes the bewilderment. It is easy to say, "Come to Christ, accept Christ, and believe on Christ." These are often only shop-worn phrases to the unsaved, however simple they may appear to the saved.

1. It means to believe in Christ as a historical person. This is necessary but not enough. There is no saving virtue in intellectual acceptance of an undisputed fact.

2. It means to believe that Jesus was what He claimed to be and His claim is perfectly clear. "I that speak unto thee am he." Here he claimed to be the Messiah of the Old Testament. He claimed to be the co-eternal Son of God. He came from God and after finishing His work, reassumed the glory which He had with the Father before the world began. "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This often repeated claim caused the Jews to arrest Him and try Him on the charge of blasphemy.

3. It means to believe that Jesus did what He said He came into the world to do. And here He spoke plainly. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He was tempted to turn aside from this work of blood redemption by Satan. Satan led him to a high place, and with a wave of the hand, directed his thoughts to the kingdoms of the world and said, "All these are mine, I know your purpose here on earth. I know you have come to save the world by dying for it. Why pay so great a price? I am the prince of this world. One act of homage toward me and you can have all the kingdoms. Just for once fall down and worship me and I will turn it all over to thee. There need be no cross or crying. You can have the world at a bargain." But what did Jesus say? "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Jesus would not be moved from His purpose and program.

On a later occasion on his way to Jerusalem--that memorable journey when it is said He set His face stedfastly to go toward the cross--he spoke to His disciples of his death. He had been with them three years but had not been able to fully reveal to them his mission. They were not able to bear it. A man with friends and yet friendless, lonely in the possession of His great secret. Now as they journeyed through Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others

Jeremias or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? " Then Peter--brave, impulsive, glorious Peter--witnessed his good confession, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Now it seems the hour had come when He could tell them His secret--they were beginning to know Him. So as they journeyed on towards Jerusalem, He began to tell them how He must suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed. At that point, Peter could stand it no longer, but began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." And Jesus turning said unto him, "Get thee behind me, Satan", the very words he had said to Satan in the wilderness. As He looked on Peter, He saw Satan had possession of him--Satan had his brain and conscience and lips. This proves that the vicarious or substitutional death of Christ is the very heart and core of the gospel. To believe on Christ means to trust Him as the one who paid our sin debt-- as the one who settled with divine justice on our behalf. And now as evidence of true faith, we follow Christ and try to live to please Him.