

## **WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 24**

### ***THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, PART 1***

There are a lot of phrases and terminology for the Christian life that we toss around. As I prepared to teach this lesson, I wanted to show my class a picture of something I felt represented what the Christian life is all about. I chose a photo of a church service where a whole bunch of people of various ages are singing. They are praising and glorifying God. On their faces are expressions of joy. They all look like they are pretty happy! In this lesson we will look closely at the Christian life in some detail.

Back in the mid-1950s Alan Redpath wrote a classic Christian book entitled Victorious Christian Living. It's a great title for a book but it is also the theme for every Christian's life. It's what being a Christian is supposed to be - people who are happy, joyful, living in victory, having purpose and peace. In his book Redpath makes this quote: "All of the Lord Jesus Christ is mine at the moment of conversion, but I possess only as much of Him as by faith I claim." That is a deep statement that you need to think about.

The whole premise of Redpaths's book, which are studies in the book of Joshua, is comparing living the Christian life to the Old Testament account of the children of Israel going in and conquering the Promised Land. God wanted His people to have victory. He had promised them this land. He wanted them to go in and possess the land. But whether they did or not was in large part up to them. Read the book of Joshua. Did they possess the entire land when it was all said and done? No. If they trusted God, He would go before them and He would conquer their enemies and they would take the land. He would bless them. They would be victorious. But if they were not obedient, they would not receive His blessings and they would not be victorious. In a lot of

cases, they did not trust God and let the Canaanites stay in the land and didn't possess the whole land.

Redpath compares the Christian life to what happens in the book of Joshua. We have battles to fight in our life also. We have a clear objective. And God has promised to go before us and win our victories for us. As a young Christian, I found his book very helpful to understand that we Christians are not there yet. We are fighting battles in our Christian life. There is no reason why a Christian who is walking closely with the Lord and yielded to the Holy Spirit should live a defeated and discouraged life. Living the Christian life is not easy. Living life in general is not easy. Hey, conquering the Promised Land was not easy. As God's children, though, we have a whole different outlook on life. And the adversity that we are going to face in this life, well let's just say, we are not facing the giants of our life alone. That is a big part of the Christian life. That's what this lesson is all about.

To start off, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus in John Chapter 3: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). *[Question 1]* The Christian life begins with **spiritual birth**. "Born of the flesh" refers to physical birth. "Born of the Spirit" refers to spiritual birth. So, Jesus is drawing this comparison between the two. Your physical life begins with physical birth and your spiritual life begins with spiritual birth. That is where the journey begins when you come to faith in Jesus Christ.

This brings us to a very familiar passage in Ephesians Chapter 2... "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is not about you and what you have done. It's about God and about what He has done in your life. The last part of the question: your spiritual birth comes about through **faith** in Jesus Christ. This is very fundamental.

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him”

(Colossians 2:6). *[Question 2]* When I got saved, I received Christ by **faith**. So therefore, in my every day Christian life, I walk the same way – in **faith**. All this is very foundational and we are going to build on it.

Since this is a study about what Baptists believe, let’s go back to The Baptist Faith and Message. Under the heading of “Salvation” it says this: “There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.”

I want to tie together the ideas of faith and lordship. The Christian life is a personal, daily relationship – a relationship between us as believers, as followers of Christ and the Lord Jesus Himself. It is not a religious belief. It is a relationship. This life is lived by faith. What’s faith in a nutshell? Faith is trust. We have faith in Christ. We entrust our lives completely to Jesus Christ – every aspect of it. Our faith is not based on nothing. It is based on His word, His promises. It is never a matter of HOW MUCH faith you or I have. What is all-important is IN WHOM do we place our faith. And the object of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to introduce this idea of “lordship.” Let’s see what The Baptist Faith and Message has to say about lordship. Under the heading of “The Church” it says this: “Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.” Then it makes this statement under the heading of “The Kingdom”: “The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular Kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King.” Same idea.

What does it mean to acknowledge the lordship or kingship of Jesus? To illustrate this point in my class I gave them a handout

entitled the “Contract of Lordship” (shown at the top of the next page). You may not have been aware of it at the time but when you came to faith in Christ, you, in essence, signed a contract very much like this. You placed your complete trust in Jesus to have His way as Lord, as King over every aspect of your life. You turned your life completely over to Him. You gave Him free reign to fill in all the blanks of your life according to His good pleasure and will. And He has and He will continue to do so as long as you live.

# CONTRACT OF LORDSHIP

I, the undersigned do hereby commit myself to trust Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and to serve Him all the remaining days of my life. I agree henceforth to love the Lord with all my heart, all my soul, and with all my mind.

I understand that when I am \_\_\_\_\_ years of age, God will lead me to

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

During my \_\_\_\_\_ years of marriage, I understand that God will give me \_\_\_\_\_ children. When I am \_\_\_\_\_ years of age, my son/daughter will

\_\_\_\_\_.

After \_\_\_\_\_ years of working for \_\_\_\_\_, I understand that God will lead me to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

When I am \_\_\_\_\_ years of age, God will bring about \_\_\_\_\_ in my life, at which time I will

\_\_\_\_\_.

I understand that for the next \_\_\_\_\_ years/months/days (circle one) that I remain alive on this earth, God has directed me to continue to trust Him fully no matter what may arise.

Signed and agreed to this the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 19

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

So then, our faith in Jesus and His lordship over us go hand in hand.

What happens when a person gets saved? What happened to you when you got saved? For me there was no big change, no “Damascus Road” experience. I realize that everyone’s salvation experience is a little different so let’s consider what Paul has to say in 2 Corinthians about this...

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [or she] is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (Corinthians 5:17).

So, according to this verse, *[Question 3]* what happens when a person gets saved? They become **a new creation**. Wow! Hold that thought and we will come back to it later.

I want you to consider what the Bible has to say about a believer’s new life in Christ. *[Question 4]* As we read these scriptures, tell me whether the statements made about them are True or False:

“Jesus answered him [Nicodemus], ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3). “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—” (1 Peter 2:2).

True or false? The Bible compares the experience of coming to faith in Christ with that of physical birth. We know from those scriptures that this is **True**. When you come to Christ you are “born again” and become a baby in Christ, drinking milk. Like a baby, it takes you a while before you can eat meat. It’s a really good analogy.

“But to all who did receive Him [Jesus], who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

True or false? If I receive Christ and believe in His name, then that gives me the right to be called a child of God. **True**. But what happens if I reject Jesus? Am I God's child? According to the passage we just read, NO.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

True or false? It is possible to earn our salvation by good works. That is **False** based on what Ephesians says. We are saved entirely by faith – by the grace of God!

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Becoming a new creation in Christ means that the old things, which used to be a part of our life, get recycled. That is a hard question. But it is **False** and here's why... Even though God can and does recycle a believer's life (transforms and renews them), the point here is that when a person gets saved, they don't just get recycled. They become a brand-new person – completely different in type, nature and character from what they were before.

What does it mean to become a completely NEW person? What fundamentally changes inside of you? The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. He wasn't there before. That is huge!

“That whoever believes in Him [Jesus talking about Himself] may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:15-16).

True or false? Believing in Christ produces eternal life. That is **True** and aren't you glad? Here believing is synonymous with faith and trust.

“And He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised”

(2 Corinthians 5:15).

True or false? A Christian no longer lives for self, but for Christ. That is **True**. This goes back to that whole concept of Lordship.