



"NOW IS THE TIME"

A study on salvation should not be merely an intellectual exercise. If it does not move a person to accept the Lord's offer of salvation, it has not accomplished its full purpose. If it does not change him in some way, the time he has spent on the study has been wasted.

TIME FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

It is time for self-examination. It is time for you to be brutally honest with yourself regarding the needs of your soul. I cannot decide what your spiritual needs are; only you can do that. You should do it on the basis of the teachings of God's Word.

First, ask yourself if you really believe in God, Jesus, and the Bible. If you have too many doubts, tell the person who gave you this publication. Further study can be arranged. I also urge you to continue reading the Bible, for "faith comes from . . . the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17; see also John 20:30, 31). If you *do* believe in Jesus, are you willing to confess your faith?

Further, are you aware of your sinfulness and lost condition? Are you ready to make a commitment to live a better life with God's help?

If you have answered "yes" to this point, ask yourself if you have been scripturally baptized. The question is not whether or not you have gone through some rite or ritual called "baptism," but whether or not you have been baptized as the New Testament teaches. Go back to the introduction, to the questionnaire that you filled out. Compare what you wrote with what the Bible teaches about baptism. (Review lessons 4 and 5.) If your baptism was not administered as described in the Bible, you will surely want to be baptized again, according to the Scrip-

tures. Talk to the one who gave you this publication; he will help you make arrangements for this.

If your baptism was scriptural, then you should ask about your worship. Have you been worshiping and serving with a church like the one in the New Testament?

Perhaps you have not been affiliated with any religious body. If that is the case, I again urge you to investigate the church of Christ nearest you. Members of churches of Christ encourage you to "put them to the test" (see 1 John 4:1). The one who invited you to read these lessons is probably a member of the church of Christ; if so, he will welcome your questions.

On the other hand, perhaps you *have* been affiliated with some religious organization. If that is the case, you need to examine it in the light of what the New Testament teaches about the church. (Review lessons 6 through 11.) Use the procedure we outlined in lesson 11. If your church does not fit the pattern of the Scriptures, you need to look elsewhere for a spiritual home.

TIME FOR OBEDIENCE

Once you understand what you need to do, it is imperative that you do not delay. You need to act at once. As we close our study, I ask you to consider three passages of Scripture:

The first is James 4:17. James said, "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin." Do you know "the right thing to do"? Do you know that you need to be baptized? If you know it but do not do it, it is sin. Do you need to be restored to the Lord? If you fail to do it, it is sin. Do you know that you need to make a change religiously? If you refuse to do what you know you should do, it is sin.

The second passage is John 14:15. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." If you love Jesus and you need to be baptized, you will be baptized. If you love Jesus and you need to be restored, you will be restored. If you love Jesus and you need to make a change religiously, you will make that change.

The third passage is 2 Corinthians 6:2. Paul wrote, "For He says, 'At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you.' Behold, now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation.'" Once you understand what you need to do, if you do not do it, one of three things may happen:

- The Lord may return before you obey. The Bible tells you to stay ready for His return, "for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" (Matthew 24:44). He can come today if it is God's will.
- You may die before you obey. No man has a guarantee on life. "... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).
- Your heart may become hardened.

Every time a man rejects Jesus' invitation, his heart becomes more hardened. It becomes more and more difficult to obey Christ and easier to reject Him. A person may become so hardened that it is impossible for him to repent (Hebrews 6:4-6). Hebrews 4:7 urges, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

CONCLUSION

I hope that our study together has helped you understand what you need to do to "draw near to God" (Hebrews 7:25; James 4:8). If it has, I pray that you will not delay in doing what you know you should do. Talk to the one who gave you this publication; he is eager to help you find peace for today and hope for tomorrow.

It is my earnest desire to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). I want to go to heaven, where God "will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; [for] the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). I pray every day that my loved ones will be there. I also hope to see *you* there. God bless you!

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