

IT IS SETTLED!

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)

By Howell Lasseter

God Doesn't Change!

We have heard it loudly proclaimed: "*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever!*" This phrase is found in Hebrews 13:8, and Bible students know the theme of the unchanging God runs through the entire Bible. Denominational preachers use the phrase to "prove" a certain doctrine has come down to us from Jesus' time on earth. The phrase is used when the false doctrine of "faith only" is being defended. The prime "example" used by these false teachers is the thief on the cross. They attempt to point out that he was saved without baptism. Let us look more closely at this thief. From Luke 24:41,42, we learn he was a believer before he was put on the cross. He knew Jesus had not sinned ("*this man hath done nothing amiss*"). He knew Jesus would have a kingdom ("*remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*"). He addressed Jesus as "Lord." Whether or not he had been baptized doesn't enter into the equation for him because Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins. Read these two other occasions when Jesus did so: Matthew 9:2b,6 and Luke 7:47,48.

Let's look briefly at how the unchanging God has dealt with people over the centuries. Genesis 4:3-5a: Knowing God is a just and fair God, we know for sure He gave Cain and Abel instructions as to what to sacrifice. God would not reject Cain for not obeying if Cain did not know what to do to obey. Today, God doesn't require animal sacrifices. Noah was given detailed instructions about building and stocking the ark. Noah's contemporaries had ample time to repent; they chose not to do so. Today, we are not required to build an ark. The Israelites were given a detailed law when they left Egypt. God gave instructions for worship, for diet, for family relationships. Read Exodus chapters 25 through 31, noting how detailed God's instructions were for the ark of the covenant, the tabernacle, the priest's clothing. Yet, none of these commands apply to us today. There is no doubt God has changed His requirements over the centuries. His nature has not changed, however. He still expects those who want to be His servants to obey the commands under which they are living. Today, the New Testament contains the law by which we may please God and be saved. Mark 16:16: "*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved*"; Acts 2:38: "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins...*"; Acts 22:16: After Saul had been fasting and praying three days, God's messenger Ananias told him, "*And now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins...*" Because we can have confidence that God is unchanging, we can know that one who omits these commands will not be pleasing to the unchanging God!