

IT IS SETTLED!

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

By Howell Lasseter

Religious Integrity (Part 2)

This week, we continue the equation $H+B(F)+R+C+B=S$. We are at the letter "B". In Mark 16:15,16, Jesus is speaking to the 11 apostles (Judas Iscariot having killed himself: Mark 3:14-19; Matthew 10:2-4; Matthew 27:3-5; Acts 1:15-18). His instructions are: *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."* "Jesus, what is to be the result of the preaching?" *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* Matthew's account reads: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father (God), and of the Son (Jesus), and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

What were the apostles to teach all nations, every creature? They were to teach the gospel. What were the hearers to believe? The gospel. *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them"* (Romans 1:16-19).

There is no human being who can be saved without hearing, believing, and obeying the "gospel" of Jesus Christ. Did Paul preach "the gospel of Paul," or "the gospel of some other man"? Galatians 1:11,12: *"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."* 1 Corinthians 15:1,2: *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."* What was, and is, that gospel? 1 Corinthians 15:3,4: *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose the third day, according to the scriptures."*

Back to the final letter in the equation - "B" - with what act does Paul tell us one follows in the likeness of the death of Christ? Romans 6:1-7: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."*