

## Some Important 'First's' To Remember

A New Year has started and today is the first Sunday. This brings to mind some important "first" passages in the Bible.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33) Of all the good things we can accomplish in life, none is more important than going to heaven. Sadly, many first seek wealth, fame, or earthly treasures and place very little value on their soul. Man is a moral creature. Our body grows old with time and usage. The soul shall exist for eternity either in heaven or hell. What will be the destiny of your soul?

"Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:5) Our world and the Lord's church would be better off if people first dealt with sin in their lives. Once done a person can then go to brothers and sisters in sin and have greater influence. Christians living godly lives can convert more of their family members and neighbors. The problem of hypocrisy is real. Many elderships spend most of their time dealing with this sin in the church.

Let us make sure we are quick to examine our own lives and then we can help others.

"First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:25) We need to take care of our personal relationships. Six of the 10 Commandments (Lying, stealing, coveting, adultery, honoring father and mother, and murder) dealt with man's relationships with his fellow man. Many New Testament passages teach the same principles. "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 5:20) The way we treat each other affects our fellowship with God. Husbands are to love their wives so their prayers may not be hindered 1 Peter 3.7. If you find out there is a problem between you and another, take care of it quickly.

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Mark 10.31) Nearing the end of Jesus' ministry the disciples jockeyed for position's of greatness in His kingdom. They started to think of all that they had left behind, the sacrifices made, and wanted to make sure they would be rewarded. James and John asked to be at Christ's right and left hand, positions of great authority. The other disciples were greatly displeased by this request. The Son of God pointed out to them that there is a different standard of greatness in the Kingdom of God. Unlike the kingdom of men, where the King was waited upon by his loyal subjects, this King, Jesus, was serving His people. If you want to be great, be a great servant.

"And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." (Acts 11.26) Isaiah spoke of a new name for the people of God, Isaiah 62.2. The term Jew can only be found in the Old Testament Book of Esther. During the captivity, the word came into usage referring to the descendants of Jacob. In the New Testament, we read it in many passages. The Jews were very proud of their lineage and special relationship to God. Yet the Gospel was not intended just for the Jews but also the Gentiles, Romans 1.16. All of those obeying the Gospel of Christ are citizens in the Kingdom of God. The term "Christian" means to be Christ like, or a follower of Christ. It is the only "name" designated by God. Let us wear it in a way pleasing to Him. "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this manner" (1 Peter 4.16).

"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." (Luke 24.1-3) Before the death of Jesus, the Sabbath was the day of worship. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20.8). Jesus was faithful in observing the Sabbath day. Since the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the first

day of the week has become the day of remembrance. It was on this day that the tomb was found empty. The Son of Man arose from the grave. He overcame the power of death. On the first day of the week the first gospel sermon was preached in Acts 2, the disciples came together to "break bread" (the Lord's Supper) Acts 20.7. John received revelation from Jesus, Revelation 1.10. Let us come to Bible Class, study His word, worship in spirit and truth, and observe the death of Christ, each first day of each and every week. - - Dennis Tucker