

## ***Why Be Baptized?***

Many religious people today deny that obedience to the command of the Lord to be baptized “for the remission of sins” is necessary to those who have heard, believed the truth, and repented of their sins. The amazing part of this is how such a conclusion could be drawn in the face of all that is taught in the New Testament on the subject. Why does one have to be baptized for the “remission of sins”?

Man cannot decide this question; it must be done by the word of God. Following are some of the reasons given in the New Testament regarding the reason for baptism:

1. It is commanded by Christ (Mark 16:15, 16; Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:48).
2. It is in answer of a good conscience (I Pet. 3:20,21).
3. It is in order that one may rejoice in the forgiveness of sins (Acts 8:39; 16:33,34).
4. It is to get into Christ (Gal. 3:27).
5. It is to get into the death of Christ where remission is found (Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:12).
6. It is to be raised with Christ to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).
7. It is to wash away sins (Acts 22:16).
8. It is to be saved (Mark 16:15,16; I Pet. 3:21).
9. It is for or unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

- by *H. E. Phillips*

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## ***Roping a Tame Steer***

One time I read that the hardest kind of steer to rope is the tame one. I expect there is a lot of truth in the statement. The steer that runs draws the noose tight that settles over his body. The tame one doesn't.

The same thing applies in leading people to Christ. Who is the hardest one to win? The person who vehemently argues that he is right when the scriptures prove otherwise? NO. The one who, like Paul, kicks against the goad? Not at all. The hardest one to bring to the Lord is the “tame” one. When you speak about the condition of his soul he readily acknowledges that he is wrong. Yes, he knows what God's word teaches. Yes, he is *aware* that if he dies in his condition he will be forever lost. And yes, he fully intends to change his situation.

And when will this be? Two different answers are given by those in this condition. There is the procrastinator who affirms that when he has made a few changes he will get right with God. He just postpones the decision.

And then there is the liar. “Liar”, you say? Yes, liar, the most fitting word of which I can think. This person faithfully promises to “be out next Sunday” but as he speaks he doesn't mean a word of it. His attitude becomes apparent when the same thing occurs many times.

Why are these two types so hard to “rope”? Well, the procrastinator, like Felix of old, is waiting for a more convenient time. He has deluded himself into thinking he will live forever. Being “tame” he won't argue with you so you can hardly tie him up with logic. Having hardened his heart he can hardly be reached with persuasion.

And the liar - he's even harder to deal with. He looks you straight in the eye and tells you he will change. Even though you feel that he is lying, you can hardly tell him so. You can't quite be sure, and if you did he would likely swell up with “righteous indignation” and declare you'd never see him again. So you hope against hope that you'll see him Sunday. Come Sunday and he isn't there. No, it's pretty hard to rope a tame steer.

- by Monroe Hawley

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### ***“Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together in My Name”***

In a frequently cited verse Jesus promises ***“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”*** (Matthew 18:20). Often folks apply this to situations where they join with one another in prayer about a specific problem. The idea is that if they agree together and jointly offer prayers, Jesus is ‘with them’ in regards to the desired outcome. Even more often this verse is used concerning worship. The concept is that Jesus approves and is effectively ‘there’ in any assembly of two or more that have joined in worship.

While people have drawn comfort from both of these notions, they sadly represent a rather serious misuse of the text in question. As in all studies, the context of Matthew 18:20 must be considered in order to draw a true conclusion about its meaning.

Jesus’ specific contextual thoughts begin in verse 15 where He addresses a situation in which a brother has committed a trespass. He instructs us to “go and tell him his fault”. If he “will not hear thee” then the next step is to “take with thee two or three witnesses”. Finally, in the case of an unrepentant brother, we must “tell it unto the church” and if that fails he is to “be unto thee as an heathen and a publican”. Jesus is, of course, describing a very serious and sad consequence. We commonly refer to this as ‘church discipline’. In these matters He gives assurance that “whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (vs. 18). It is in this specific sense that He promises “where two or three are gathered together in my name” (or by His authority) “there am I in the midst of them”. He is ‘with us’ in the sense of approving our actions.

Thus we see that the frequently quoted phrase really does not have ‘prayer groups’ or, especially, worship assemblies in view at all. To use (misuse) the passage in this way has led Christians to faulty conclusions like this: go ahead and skip the regular assembling of the church, have a brief devotional in their hotel room, and then head off to the amusement park for fun and games. Folks who do so should not take any false comfort in the idea that Jesus is ‘with them’ in such abuses. Matthew 18:20 offers no such justification. Think!

***Special note:*** The misuse of Matthew 18:20 has been very evident in our current coronavirus crisis. Brethren are using this verse to justify the ‘virtual’, ‘online’, ‘remote’, ‘at home’ observance of the Lord’s Supper. Again, the text in question does not speak to or authorize such. We firmly believe, as many have expressed, that the Lord’s Supper is to be done when “the whole church has come together into one place” (1 Cor. 14:23 – see also 1 Cor. 11:18, 20, 34 and Acts 20:7)

- by Greg Gwin