Clips from Psalms

Psalms 103:1-4
Praise for the Lord’s Mercies

"Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgives all our iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction and crowns us with loving kindness."

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The world’s view of the Catholic church has not really changed much through the years. When I was a kid growing up in the Baptist church I had concluded that the Catholic Church was the church that God gave his headship to. Though the Catholic church had serious differences with the Baptist I just figured they were the most holy with their system of pope, bishops, and priests. Most movies that depict religious events will showcase a Catholic priest. Today’s world views religion from a Catholic foundation. No wonder then that they get much attention from the media whenever events occur within the church. The Catholics have been in the news of late.

The February 12, 2013 headline of the Times Record News read, “A Historic Moment, Lacking ‘strength of mind and body,’ pope plans departure.” The article began by saying, “With a few words in Latin, Pope Benedict XVI did what no pope has done in more than half a millennium, stunning the world by announcing his resignation Monday and leaving the already troubled Catholic Church to replace the leader of its 1 billion followers by Easter.” Pope Benedict XVI, born Joseph Alois Ratzinger, will be replaced this March. A conclave of Catholic cardinals, who are under the age of 80, will vote on who the next pope will be. When one man receives two thirds of vote he will be elected. The elected pontiff will be introduced from the loggia overlooking St. Peter’s Square with the words, “Habemus papam!” (Latin for “We have a pope!). He then will impart his first blessing.

Catholics believe that the authority for a pope is Biblically based. While driving home from work a few days ago I heard a Catholic explaining his faith in the pope’s history. The man said that Peter was the first pope and that the Bible authorized successors of Peter throughout the following generations. Their proof text is found at Matthew 16:18-19. Jesus had asked his disciples who say that he is. The Lord then asked the disciples who they believed he was. Peter made the memorable confession on this occasion by saying, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus then answered saying, “And I also say unto you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail. I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19).
Catholics believe that Jesus gave Peter the authority to bind and loose laws upon man. He therefore would stand as the vicar of Christ on earth as the pontiff of Rome. The Catholic Church claims that through “apostolic succession” Peter handed down his rank as pope and the apostles handed their office to others generation after generation. WWW.catholic.com defines apostolic succession as, “the line of bishops stretching back to the apostles. All over the world, all Catholic bishops are part of a lineage that goes back to the time of the apostles, something that is impossible in Protestant denominations (most of which do not even claim to have bishops).”

While the history of Catholicism may have an outward appearance of holiness and validity a close look of the Bible proves them to be alien from Christ and his church. Christ’s church never had one man, a pope, over his universal church. Jesus Christ alone stands as head of the church (Ephesians 5:24). Peter’s job was not to be head of the church after Christ’s death but rather to spread the gospel and confirm it with miracles (Matthew 16:18-19; 28:18-20 and John 16:1-15).

Bishops were added to the Lord’s church but they served the local church of their area alone. Peter himself served as a bishop only to the local church he was a member of (see 1 Peter 5:1-2). When Paul and Barnabas established churches in Galatia they also installed elders or bishops in each church (see Acts 14:23). The churches of the New Testament day were autonomous being superintended by through an eldership or bishops who met the qualifications outlined at 1 Timothy 3:1ff. These men were not successors of apostles but rather men who simply met God’s authorized qualifications.

No where in the Bible do we see the apostles of Jesus Christ handing over their office of apostleship. The apostles were all chose by Christ (Luke 5:27 etc.). Their work ended when the word of God was completed (1 Corinthians 13:1ff). The only thing handed down to others was the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15).

The more we explore the Bible the more we see that it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that was handed down from generation to generation and it is this message that saves men (Romans 1:16). No man today stands in the place of Christ over his church. The Catholic Church, much like all other denominations, does not conduct their works by the authority of Christ but by a man’s ideas. Jeremiah warned that it is not man’s place to do such things (Jeremiah 10:23). You and I will only have a proper view of any church when we first look to God’s word. Though the world seems to have always viewed the Catholic church as the one true holy church the scriptures prove them to be apostates. A “Historic Moment?” Not in the eyes of God.

John C Robertson

The Christian is one who has undergone a metamorphosis in life. The Apostle Paul writes, “give thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love...” (Col. 1:12-13). The word “translated” (metestesen) means to go from one state to another. A change has taken place in the mind of one who would put on Christ through baptism (Romans 12:1-2). The title Christian continues to be a popular self designation by many today. We want to identify the Bible Christian in this lesson.

The Christian is:

A. A Believer


B. A Saint - (Greek hagios) “of persons, holy, and pure” (LS 5). Arndt and Gingrich’s Greek English lexicon defines the word as, “Of human beings consecrated to God, holy... what is holy” (AG 9). Moulton defines the word as, “Members of the first Christian communities; pure, righteous, ceremonially or morally; holy” (Moulton 3). Christians are saints because they meet the highest standard of holiness found in the Lord (See Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15-17; 1 John 4:17).

See: Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1 etc.

C. A Disciple - (Acts 11:26) - Greek mathetes meaning “a learner” (Strong’s # 3101). The disciple is one who is willing to hear and learn (John 6:44-45; Romans 10:17). To be a disciple one must be meek - the ability to examine one's self and make honest assessments. Meek people say, "Not my will but thy will O Lord." Disciples are willing not only to learn but to permit their lives be guided by the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 10:23). The learner of God’s truths develop a friendship with God that is nurtured through time spent in study (2 Timothy 2:15).

D. The Christian has a Peculiar Attitude - Hates sin and feels the sting of guilt and remorse when participating in it (Romans 12:9). Deeply bothered by sin - Psalms 51; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2; Acts 8:22

E. Has a Peculiar (unusual - not common) Character - Care and concern for others physical and spiritual well being (James 1:27; 1 John 3:16-17 - Acts 18:5-6; Ephesians 5:11).

Conclusion

There are those who call themselves Christians and then there are those who ARE Christians. A Christian is a believer who has been forgiven of their sins. He is one that desires others to be forgiven of their sins and thereby sows the seeds of the gospel. The Christian’s purpose is to live holy as God is holy. The true Christian does not treat others as though they were lesser of a person or lesser in intelligence. The true Christian recognizes their great flaws and gives God thanks for his mercy in their lives. Love motivates the Christian’s every action. He learns and exhibits a peculiar character and attitude revealed in the truths of the gospel. Hope governs the Christians’ life. Why don’t you become a Christian today?