

ARE YOU SELLING YOUR SOUL ON THE INSTALLMENT PLAN?**Ahab mortgaged his soul.**

“And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord” (I Kings 21:20). While the title of this article sounds repulsive, it is a grave possibility. When we first think of the question, we feel that no one would be foolish enough to sell his soul. If someone had asked Ahab early in life if he would sell his soul, he, no doubt, would have said no. But Elijah told him that he had sold his soul. We may do a Ahab did.

Down Payment – Marriage

Ahab took out the first mortgage on his soul when he married. “But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, WHOM JEZEBEL HIS WIFE STIRRED UP” (I Kings 21:25). “And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the on of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him” (I Kings 16:31). These verses tell the story of how he mortgaged his soul when he married Jezebel.

Second Payment – Compromise

The first down payment on his mortgage of his soul after he married was the compromise of religion. The same verse tells us of his marriage, tells that he served and worshipped Baal. No, he did not pretend to completely reject God, he tried to please his wife by recognizing Baal along with God, but Ahab could not worship both. He was in a position now of having to choose between his wife and his God. He lacked the strength to hold on faithfully to God. This is a lesson we need to write deep into the hearts of our young people. While it is not always true that marrying one that is not a Christian leads to the selling of the soul, it happens too many times. I can point out many instances where husbands and wives are making the second installment on their mortgages by trying to compromise essential truths of Christianity. Let Ahab speak from the past and warn against the danger of mortgaging your soul in marrying.

Third Payment

Ahab’s next installment in selling his soul was a piece of land. “And after this Ahab said to Naboth, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed and turned away his face, and would eat no bread” (I Kings 21:2-4). It is in reference to this incident that the prophet reminds Ahab that he had sold his soul. Ahab was not the last one to sell his soul for material things. Judah sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 27:3). The rich, young ruler sold his soul for his possessions (Mark 10:17-22). Ananias and Sapphira sold their souls for money also (Acts 5:1-10). The rich man in Luke 12 sold his soul for his crops and more and bigger barns. The rich man in Luke 16 sold his soul for high living while he ignored a hungry man at his gate. These are but a few examples in the Bible of people selling their souls for land, houses, and money. Multitudes today are doing the same thing. There are those that know what they ought to do to become a Christian, but refuse to do so because it would cost them money. Many in the church are neglecting their souls because of trying to maintain a standard of living that requires all of their time. Some in the church can barely spare the Lord an hour on Sunday morning because of the demands of material standards of this age. Our lives are so full of things involved in gaining a living that we have no time to do personal work, or visit the sick,

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

SOLEMN SUPPLICATION FOR A SERVANT

Text: _____

- I. The _____ Sin
 - A. _____ He Was
 - B. _____ He Went
 - C. _____ He Became
- II. _____ Plea
 - A. Plea for _____
 - B. Plea for _____
- III. The _____ Mercy
 - A. _____ him as a _____
 - B. _____ him as a _____

A CALL BACK

Text: _____

- I. A Call to the _____
 - A. He _____ His _____
 - B. He _____ His _____
 - C. He _____ His _____
- II. A Call to the _____
 - A. They _____
 - B. They _____
 - C. They _____
 - D. They _____

or seek out and help those that are in need. We are like the excuse-makers in the day of Christ, we have no time for the Lord's invitation to enjoy spiritual things because we have oxen or lands to see about.

-Franklin Camp

IF THE ANSWER IS YES

In determining whether or not any given denomination is the one true church revealed in the New Testament, a simple question can be posed to its sectarian adherents. The question is as follows: "Can an individual be saved outside your denomination?" If the answer is yes, then that religious group is most assuredly not the church. Here is why.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus promised that He would build His church. Notice that Christ said **HE** would build the church and that **only one** would be built. That church is identified by the apostle Paul as the body (Eph. 1:22-23) and is said to be the only body (Eph. 4:4), hence the only church. This church is also identified as the bride and Christ as its bridegroom (Eph. 5:22-23; cf. Matt. 9:15; 25:1). Christ is not a polygamist. He has but one bride for which He nourishes and cares.

The beautiful bride of Christ, the church, consists of a blood-bought people who, by faith, have been baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38,47). Collectively, these baptized believers are known as the saved, the church, the body, the temple, and the kingdom (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:27; 1 Cor. 3:16; Col. 1:13, respectively). They belong to Christ, and wear His name (Rom. 16:16; 1 Pet. 4:16). It is this entity of people whom Christ will take to glory at the Judgment. Christ is clearly and unmistakably the Savior of this body - His body, the church (Eph. 5:23). Undeniably, salvation is to be found in the church and only in the church. Since the church is the body of Christ, and salvation is only in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10; Acts 4:12), it follows that **one cannot be saved outside the church**. When Christ comes again, He will save only those who are in His church.

Therefore, if an individual tells me that I do not have to be a member of their church to be saved, then I can know with certainty that their church is **not** the church of our Lord. Nearly all denominations assert that you can be saved even though you are not a member of their church. However, no one can be saved apart from **the Lord's** church. Thus, any religious group espousing the doctrine that salvation can be procured outside the church is not a church which belongs to Christ. Salvation is in the church. If you want to be saved, then you must be in the church.

-John Moore

THE BOOK OF RECONSTRUCTED DEFENSE

In the early and ancient times of which are considered in the Old Testament, cities had one main worry concerning security. Bombs, missiles, paratroopers, and even catapults had not yet come into use for contemporary warfare, thus every city could easily be protected from invaders with a very secure and sturdy wall. If the wall were not built well enough to survive attack, or if enough destruction could be leveled upon the wall that it would be weakened, then the city, like the wall would ultimately fall. When Zerubbabel led those 50,000 captives home from Babylon in 536 B.C. there was no wall, having been destroyed by the Babylonian haze back in 586 B.C. But it was not until ninety two years later that something begins to be done about it.

Nehemiah's record is one of an attempt to reconstruct Jerusalem from a physical and defensive standpoint. In 444 B.C., Nehemiah, the cupbearer for Persian king Artaxerxes, was informed that, "*The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire*" (Nehemiah 1:3). Upon hearing of this tragic news, Nehemiah enters a desperate state of lamentation for his brethren and requests of king Artaxerxes that, "*If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchers, that I may build it*" (Nehemiah 2:5). Upon receiving permission to likewise return to his homeland and aid his brethren in rebuilding their form of defense, Nehemiah gathered some of his men and made the long trek home.

Upon his inspection of the fallen wall, Nehemiah's charge to the people was, "*Ye see the disress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach*" (Nehemiah 2:17). Though he faced opposition, Nehemiah's determination was rock solid because he trusted in God to prosper them and provide for them to accomplish this task. (Nehemiah 2:20). His determination was beneficial to the work because it obviously inspired the others to work as well, and the wall was in its entirety completed in but fifty-two days (Nehemiah 6:15). At this point Jerusalem gains the stability that it so desperately needed and the city begins to take form once again.

However, it is in Nehemiah 8 that one of the greatest events in all of scripture is recorded. It simply cannot be described to any better effect that it can simply be read.

"And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Nehemiah 8:1-6).

The reverence and zeal these people had toward the law of the Lord was of such a degree that they came together as one man all day and when the book was opened they stood out of respect. To a people that had been so evil this is a beautiful sign of their lives turning back in the right direction.

Wilkinson and Boa summed up this book by saying. "In this book, everything is restored except the king. The temple is rebuilt, Jerusalem is reconstructed, the covenant is renewed, and the people are reformed. The Messianic line is intact, but the King is yet to come." That is the picture of Christ in Nehemiah. He is seen as the King to come, through whom spiritual restoration would occur just as did Jerusalem's physical restoration.

Wherein Nehemiah deals mainly with the physical standpoint of Jerusalem and Judah's return to some state of normality it likewise has so many valuable spiritual lessons that are too numerable for this space. However, one that could not go unmentioned is God's obvious desire for restoration to take place among His children, which He continues to desire today. If ever we find ourselves in spiritual exile similar to that of Judah's physical, we can be comforted to know that God wants restoration. All that then remains would be what are we willing to do about it?

-Andy Brewer