

On Becoming a Christian

Acts 2.37-37

A local paper had a letter from a man containing the sentence "after all, Hitler was a Christian. He was born into a Roman Catholic family." From the start it needs to be said that you cannot be born a Christian or be a Christian because of the family into which you were born. In the words of Jesus you have to be "born again" to become a Christian. (John 3.3f). He told His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel. He who believes and is baptised shall be saved" (Mark 16.16; Matt.28.18-19). So:

- 1. Believe:** Accept Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord and Master of your whole life. That means abandoning the way and spirit of self and entering into what Jesus called a new birth.
- 2. Be Baptised.** In the sacraments (baptism and communion) what is done demonstrates what is said and what is said is acted out in what is done. In baptism we enact a burial and a resurrection; we enter into a death and burial of our old life and rise, "born again", into a new Life with Christ (Rom. 6.4). That new life is to be total – the baptism into Christ not only of our body, mind and spirit but of our attitudes, relationships, home, work and wallet.
- 3. Take Your Part as a Member of God's Family:** In baptism we enter not only into new life but into a new family – the Church of God, all our fellow believers. All are one and equal as God's children but at different stages of growth and all having different gifts. Paul likens the Church to a body, having many parts yet still one body (1 Cor.12.12-27). Be a part and play your part in your church and its mission.
- 4. Grow in Christ.** In becoming a Christian we set out on a path of discipleship. We have not "arrived", except at the starting line. But we are at the beginning of a new life, learning a new way of being and living with the Spirit of Jesus within us and the New Testament to teach and guide us. Read your New Testament every day, let it teach you, form your prayers and character and lead you into steady growth in Jesus Christ.
- 5 Take Your Part as a Member of God's Team.** In turning from the spirit and ways of this world to the Spirit and ways of Jesus we find two things as He promised (which at first glance may seem contrary). They are in Matthew 11.28-29. The first is an inner peace with God. The second is to take His yoke upon you. You are now to live as Christ's representative in the world, taking your part in His mission and purpose.

Questions for discussion:

1. What does it mean to believe in Christ - after all the devil believes in His existence?
2. Does believer's baptism matter? Why or why not?
3. How, and in what respects, is baptism like the crossing of the Red Sea to the ancient Israelites?
4. Do you think infant baptism can make a baby a Christian or is it really a dedication of parents?
5. What has helped you most to grow as a Christian? What other help would you like?
6. Do you regard the church as a place to go for worship services on a Sunday or as a place of fellowship and encouragement or as the centre and training ground as a local mission unit, or what?
7. Have you discovered your gifts and part to play within the movement which is the local church? What more help would you welcome to this end?
8. In Matthew 11 verses 28-29 Jesus promised us rest and also a yoke. How are these two things compatible? To what extent is our church taking both seriously? To what extent are you taking both seriously?