

OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW

"Out with the old and in with the new" are words often heard as a new year begins. The concept of a "new beginning" is a Biblical one, but not in reference to the beginning of a new year. The apostle Paul said that after being baptized, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). The same author wrote, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). And of course, Jesus said that one must be born again (John 3:3) of which new birth Peter wrote, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:23). That conversion from alien sinner to a child of God is the ultimate "out with the old and in with the new" that man may experience.

However, there is certainly a sense in which a certain day can signify a new beginning. In fact, each and every day signifies a new beginning. Each day that we wake, we have the opportunity to live it better than we did the one before. Each day is an opportunity to serve God with all our heart and all our soul and all our might. With each day comes new temptations, new trials and new tribulations; which all provide for a new opportunity to overcome them, making our faith stronger than ever. With each new day that we live, we find new opportunities to help those who need our help, either spiritually or physically. Indeed, each day is an opportunity to cast out our shortcomings and embrace those things our life is really in need of.

Yet, the beginning of a new year is certainly a time that causes many of us to take stock of what we have been for the past year. In fact, if it does not cause you to do so, we encourage you to consciously endeavor to do so. There is a saying, "if you continue to do everything the same as you always have, everything will continue as it has". The point of this is that unless we change our habits, our efforts and our aims, we will be just what we have been. If we are lukewarm, lazy and slothful Christians, we will remain lukewarm, lazy and slothful Christians if we continue just as we did for the past year. If the local congregation (which is simple the aggregate of all the members) continues as we did all of 2014, we can expect no more growth, no more maturity and no more pleasure in the eyes of God than we did in 2014. Now, let's see just what we can do with 2015!

Robert

TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION

A first question we wish to answer, which is a different one than that of Shakespeare is, to be or not to be "**what**". We will go ahead and answer that question with just one word, a "**Christian**". Now, our question reads, "to be a Christian or not to be a Christian, that is the question".

The answer to our new and more complete question should be an adamant "**YES**". But "why?", is our next question. The answer to this question is just as simple as the last. Because salvation is only in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Standing before the Jewish leadership, including Annas the high priest, Peter proclaimed, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul stated, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (II Tim. 2:10). The apostle John wrote, "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (I John 5:11).

But, we want to add yet another question to the mix. "When" should we become Christians? The answer to this is, "just as soon as you know how to become a Christian". There are three good reasons to not wait a single day after learning how to become a Christian before doing so. First, you simply do not know when you are going to die. Life, "is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). Secondly, you do not have any idea when the Lord will come again, making it too late to make any needed changes. Men may try to figure out when He will return and many have set dates, but the Lord Himself said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36). Peter said it will come as "a thief in the night" (II Pet. 3:10). And thirdly, when one waits, he risks becoming too hard hearted to ever make the change. The Hebrew writer said, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13).

Want to know how to become a Christian? In short: hear God's word, believe it, including believing in Christ, repent of your sins, confess the name of Christ and be baptized into Christ. *Robert*