

PLEASE DON'T CALL IT A "MIRACLE"



If you have watched the news you will recognize that this is an image of the US Airways jet, flight 1549 that landed in the Hudson River in New York on Thursday afternoon. All of the passengers and crew survived, although there were some injuries, thanks to the expertise of the pilot. With both engines out, after, according to reports, a flock of Canadian geese had been passing by and some had been caught in the jets engines, he was able to bring the airplane down intact in an area where there were a number of ferries and other boats that were able to pick up the passengers and bring

them to the shore. This was immediately dubbed as it was immediately dubbed as the "miracle on the Hudson" by the news media. Although it was a remarkable event and the skill of the pilot was clearly responsible for the "textbook" landing on the water, was it really a "miracle"?

What is a miracle? It can be defined as: "The supernatural intervention of God in which the normal laws of nature are suspended." In this instance, what "normal laws of nature" were suspended? Clearly the answer is "none." Indeed, those who are so ready to call the survival of the passengers and crew of this airplane a "miracle" also the survival of the passengers and crews as being the result of the skills of the pilot, Chesley B. "Sully" Sullenberger, III, a veteran of US Airways. Also, the waters of the Hudson River were still there and indeed frigid, the structure stayed intake thanks to the skill of the designers and builders of the aircraft. Additionally, there was the quick reaction of those in the area in responding to get the people out of the water as a result, we are told, of the training that has been received since 9/11. Real miracles are such as the raising of Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for four days (John 11) and the restoring a man's hand (Mark 3) by Jesus Christ as well as the apostle Paul being unharmed after being bitten by a poisonous viper (Acts 28).

Many today are quick to speak of something as a "miracle" when the elements necessary for a miracle are not there. For instance, many today speak of the "miracle of birth." The birth of a baby is indeed a great and wonderful thing but it is not a miracle. Now if a person were to be created from the dust of the ground, as was Adam, then you would have a miracle but such does not occur today.

As we have noticed, there were miracles performed in Bible times by the Lord and by others. However, when one studies the miracles of the Bible it is clear that the purpose of miracles was to reveal and confirm the Word of God. That purpose has been served. When something serves its purpose, it is no longer of value after its purpose has been fulfilled and they are set aside. Further, Scripture teaches in such places as I Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 that all of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit will fail, cease, and vanish away. This would occur when "*that which is perfect is come*" and the "*unity of faith*" is achieved. Scripture reveals that that would take place when the Scriptures were completed and confirmed. Such was achieved by the end of the first century. Further since the power to perform miracles and other miraculous gifts of the Spirit were only received by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:19) and we have no living apostles today then the age of the miraculous has ceased.

While we are indeed thankful for the survival of all on board flight 1549, we should not falsely label it a miracle.

Ken Chumbley

BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

Volume 10 Number 3 January 18 2009
A PUBLICATION OF THE BELVEDERE CHURCH OF CHRIST

535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841-2574

(Greater Augusta, GA area)

"Preaching them right into Heaven"

It seems that some preachers conducting funeral services attempts to "**preach the deceased right into heaven.**" I once heard a denominational preacher at a funeral service declare that he guaranteed that the deceased had gone to heaven. Of course it is impossible for a preacher or anyone else to make such a guarantee. Only the Lord has the prerogative of determining our eternal destination, which is based on whether or not we have lived in harmony with His inspired Word. The Apostle John, in speaking of the day of judgment, declared: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

The foolishness of a preacher attempting to preach anyone into heaven is seen in the following story. An old reprobate who spent most of his adult life carousing from one beer joint to another died. He was known as the town drunk. This man left in this life a wife and seven children. The government and society had provided for his family, in that he was too irresponsible to do so. All he left his family were debts of unpaid bills. The scripture warns, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:8). He hadn't "darkened the doors of the church building" since he was a young boy. During his funeral service the preacher raved on about what a fine citizen and Christian this man had been. The preacher assured the family that the deceased was now in heaven. The widow punched one of her boys and said, "Johnny, you go up there and see if that's your pa in that box!" (Burying the dead in a coffin made of pine wood was quite common in the past. It was sometimes referred to as a pine box.) No preacher can preach anyone into heaven, including this man who was worse than an infidel.

Hear the inspired words of Solomon at Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

*Dub Mowery
Pritchett, TX*

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

EVANGELIST: Ken Chumbley - Tel. No. (803) -279-8663

www.belvederechurchofchrist.org E-mail church@belvederechurchofchrist.org

THREE IMPORTANT DAYS

This week there are three important days for this nation on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

The first of these days is Martin Luther King Day on Monday in honor of the life of one who was involved in the struggle for equal rights in this nation for some Americans whose origins are in Africa. The second is on Tuesday with the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States, Barrack Obama. The third occurs on Wednesday that marks the 36th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision on January 22, 1973, that legalized abortion in this country. Sadly, this anniversary is likely to be overlooked because of the events of the previous two days. Yet, of the the three days this is the most important because by the Supreme Court's action in 1973, the law has made it possible for millions of unborn to be denied the right to "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" which is part of this nation's constitution.

Following the election in November a new Congress was elected that took their seats earlier this month which along with the new administration, has many more proponents of "abortion on demand" so that the rights of the unborn are likely to be overlooked, and could even be restricted even more with changes to the abortion laws of this nation likely that would make abortion even more readily available than it is at this time. As Christians, we have an obligation to pray for those in authority (I Timothy 2:1-3) and we do need to pray that those in authority will make decisions that are in harmony with the will of God, not only in the area of the right to life of the unborn but in other areas in which the Congress along with the new administration will be enacting new laws.

We need to remember that abortion is nothing less than the killing of the innocents. God tells us that the slaughter of innocents is one of the seven things that are an abomination to Him: *"These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren"* (Proverbs 6:16-19). Thus we need to do all in our power to convince those in positions of authority not to pursue policies that would take away the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" from the innocent unborn and remind that of the teaching of Proverbs 14:34: *"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."*

Further, we need to teach all that we can of the sin of abortion and do all that we can to save the lives of the innocent unborn. We need to teach God's will concerning procreation that a man and his wife bear children, that the only approved place for sex is within marriage. We need to teach that abstinence, not safe sex should be the goal of young people until they enter into the bonds of matrimony.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick's aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron' sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, Justine Hall's husband, Joe and Tim Smith.

Pam Gossett responded to the invitation seeking prayers and asking forgiveness for not being as faithful as she could be. She has gone to her daughters in Atlanta, Georgia for a few days.

Lanny Niver was not out last week because of his back problems and has been in Atlanta having some tests.

Joe Hall, husband of Justine is recuperating at home. After a visit to the Doctor this week, he does not have to go back for four weeks.

Rachel Fitzpatrick was not well Wednesday evening.

The Wilsons are out of town today visiting with Kimberly and Jennifer.

Our next pot luck is planned for tonight, after the evening worship. It will be a chili, soup, sandwiches, etc. meal. Plan to be with us for this meal together.

Baptismal Regeneration

The churches of Christ have been accused by some of "baptismal regeneration". This article is the answer to that accusation.

We will start with "What is Baptismal Regeneration?" In the pagan system of infant baptism, the idea was believed that the water, through magical powers, could remove sin. The water is still known as Holy Water, which could both remove sin and evil spirits. In the Middle Ages and later, like the pagans before, the Roman Catholic Church was highly superstitious. This today has come down in the denominations that practice infant baptism. When infant baptism is carried out, the child has no choice, the water holy water removes Original Sin and the child is regenerated. This nonsense is without any biblical warrant opposing scripture, in origin it is purely pagan. For further consultation please visit: <http://TheDevilsDoor.org> website, dealing with the origin of infant baptism.

Christians have never taught that the water has the power to regenerate an innocent child. Neither do Christians teach the water alone has the power to absolve sin from a willing candidate. Water alone does not regenerate in baptism.

What Christians do teach is that God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, does forgive the sin of a repentant believer who is baptized, then that person is added to the church of our Lord. The power of forgiveness is not in the water, but in the Blood of Christ where obedience will lead the repentant sinner into the water, where salvation in Christ is to be had.

1 Pet. 3:21 "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

Rev. 1:5 "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own Blood."

Acts 22:16 "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptised, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the LORD."

*Keith Sisman
Ramsey, England*