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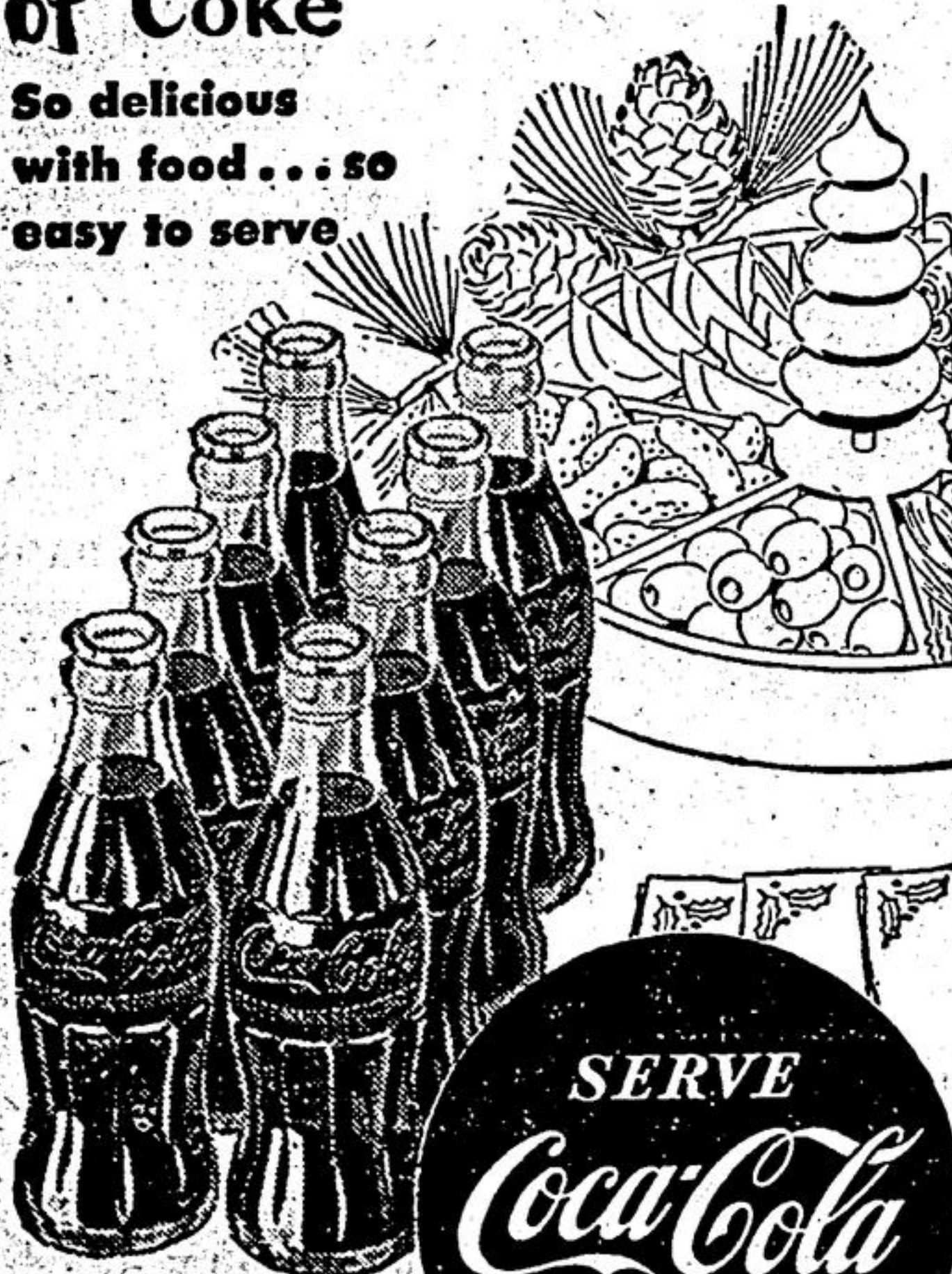
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THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

THE GOSPEL FOR ALL

Golden Text. — For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

—Rom. 10:13.

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE

Approach to the Lesson

All teachers of theology know that there are always some students who take delight in putting their professor on the spot with such questions as, "Do you accept the five points of Calvinism?" One of these points is, of course, the limited atonement—namely, that Christ died only for the elect. And that is a hotly debated point. Strangely enough, both those who hold it and those who do not, appeal to Calvin. One theologian will bring forth proof that Calvin held the limited atonement. Another will take pains to show that in his later works Calvin yielded to the pressure of the teaching of an atonement available to all. One statement he did endorse as acceptable was that the atonement was "sufficient for the elect."

It seems to me that there is frequently a degree of irreverence, if not of impertinence, in some of our discussions. We seem unwilling to grant that there are depths in the divine mind beyond our ability to plumb. What is clearly revealed we should accept with confidence; what is swathed in mystery we should handle with caution.

Some things may be stated quite categorically.

1. The need for an atonement is universal, for sin is universal (Rom. 3:10-12).

2. The love which provided that atonement embraced the whole world (John 3:16).

3. The command of our Lord was that the Gospel be preached in all the world (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15).

4. A bona fide offer of salvation is made in the Gospel to all men. The invitation is universal (Rev. 22:17).

5. Such is the nature of the Gospel that men are morally responsible for their response to it. (John 3:18).

In other words we have a "whosoever" Gospel, and that is the great theme of our lesson.

Verse by Verse

Acts 10:34.—"I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," Peter always knew that this was true, within the confines of Israel; but that it extended beyond Israel was a revelation to him.

Verse 35.—"But in every nation he that feareth him . . . is accepted . . ." Men are not accepted with God for the color of their skin or the length of their genealogy, but for the attitude of their heart. Notice that fearing God and working righteousness always go together.

Verse 36.—" . . . preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all)." While peace is indeed "by Jesus Christ," I believe that here "by (or through) Jesus Christ" should be attached to "preaching." He was a preacher of the good tidings of peace, and secured the peace that He preached through His Cross. Notice emphasis on the Lordship of Christ.

Verse 37.—"That word . . . began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached." Here is a historical note, marking the beginning of the Gospel.

Verse 38.—"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good." Jesus is the anointed one, the Christ. He was at once God incarnate, and a God-anointed man. In the power of that anointing He wrought His mighty acts.

Verse 39.—"And we are witnesses . . . who they slew and hanged on a tree." Peter did not forget Acts 1:8. Nor did he mince words about who were responsible for the death of Christ. See 2:23; 3:14, 15; 4:10.

Verse 40.—"Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly." The Resurrection was the pivot of the apostolic message. It is the keystone of the arch of Christian truth. Therefore it was attested "by many infallible proofs" (1:3).

Verse 41.—" . . . unto witnesses chosen before of God . . . who did eat and drink with him . . ." As the Resurrection was a divine operation, so the witnesses were sovereignly chosen. It was a sacred trust. For the eating and drinking, compare Luke 24:41-43.

Verse 42.—"And he commanded us to preach . . . ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." Compare 17:31; John 5:22, 27. This item in their message must have been one of the commandments included in Acts 1:2.

Verse 43.—"To him all the prophets witness . . . whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Where did Peter get this insight into the teaching of the prophets? See Luke 24:44-47. Do not miss the "whosoever" of this verse.

Verse 44.—"The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." No waiting for ceremonial formalities. The response to the Word was instant, for God had prepared their hearts.

Verse 45.—"They of the circumcision were astonished . . ." They did not realize that a new dispensation had dawned, when the distinction of Jew and Gentile would have no validity for salvation.

Verse 46.—"For they heard them speak with tongues . . ." Some outward manifestation of the Spirit was necessary to convince the Jews of God's acceptance of the Gentiles. This has been called the "Gentile Pentecost."

Verse 47.—"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized . . ." Peter, who a while ago was unwilling to go to the home of the Gentile, is now ready to receive him into the Christian community through the rite of baptism.

Verse 48.—"And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Baptism is a command as well as a sacred privilege. Compare "in the name of the Lord" with Matthew 28:19 and Acts 19:5.

Romans 10:8.—"The word is nigh thee . . . the word of faith, which we preach." No pilgrimages are needed, no religious crusades. The mighty deed was done on Calvary; now for us there is the Word to be believed.

Verse 9.—"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here is a confession based on a belief. The emphasis is on the word "Lord."

Verse 10.—" . . . believeth unto righteousness . . . confession . . . unto salvation." Two great principles are here: (1) justification by faith, and (2) no salvation apart from the Lordship of Christ.

Verse 12.—" . . . no difference between the Jew and the Greek . . . rich unto all that call upon him." Here the truth with which Peter was struggling in Acts 10 is clearly enunciated.

Verse 13.—"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The third "whosoever" in our lesson. Once again the emphasis is on Lord.

Salvation is not from Christ the teacher, or Christ the example; but Christ the Lord.

The Heart of the Lesson

Both our passages were addressed to Romans. The portion in Acts constituted Peter's declaration to the Roman Cornelius and his company, and linked with that we have part of Paul's great doctrinal statement to the Roman Christians.

It is interesting to note the differences in the two statements. Peter concentrates on the historical facts concerning Christ, while Paul deals with the human response necessary for entering into the provided salvation.

Notice the facts which Peter lists: the life of Christ, the death of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ. As for the life, he declares that it was one of ministry in the power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Notice that Peter, who charged the Jews with the death of Christ very directly when addressing them, is more general in his statement to Gentiles: "whom they slew." The Resurrection, he declares, was openly and fully attested. He presents himself and his companions as witnesses both of the wonderful works of Christ's life and of the fact of His resurrection.

Two high offices Peter claims for Jesus: universal Lord (v.36), and universal Judge (v.42). In the name of this august Person, Peter extends the offer of remission of sins (v.43), in keeping with the testimony of "all the prophets."

In Paul's statement the facts are taken for granted, and our responsibility regarding them is the matter pressed. Heart and mouth are called to unite in a true response. No mere intellectual assent to the Gospel facts will suffice. They must be received into the depths of one's being so that the whole life will feel the impact of them. The crucified, risen, and exalted Jesus is acknowledged as Lord. Believing in Him is nothing less than that. Where there is no confession of Him as Lord, there is no true faith.

While Peter and Paul approach their theme in such different ways, see how they speak with one voice:

1. They both insist on the Lordship of Jesus (Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:9).

2. They both call to faith in Him (Acts 10:43; Rom. 10:11).

3. They both herald a "whosoever" Gospel (Acts 10:43; Rom. 10:1, 13).

4. They both recognize the equal right of Jew and Gentile in the Gospel (Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 10:12).

Home Economist

Miss Anna P. Lewis, Director of the Women's Institute Branch and Home Economics Service of the Ontario Department of Agriculture, has announced the appointment of Miss Marilyn McPhail, B. Sc. (H.E.), as County Home Economist for the Counties of Stormont, Glengarry, Dundas, Prescott and Russell. Miss McPhail's headquarters will be at the office of the Department of Agriculture, Cornwall. Miss McPhail, a recent graduate of Macdonald College, is the daughter of the late M.C. McPhail, former Principal of the Kemptville Agricultural School.

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